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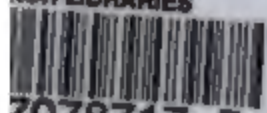
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SELECT WORKS

OF

Martin Luther:

AN

OFFERING TO THE CHURCH OF GOD

IN

“THE LAST DAYS,”

2 Tim. iii. 1.

TRANSLATED FROM THE WORKS OF LUTHER,

BY THE REV. HENRY COLE,

OF CLARE HALL, CAMBRIDGE,

AND LATE LECTURER OF WOOLWICH, KENT.

The memory of the just is blessed : but the name of the wicked shall rot. Prov. x. 7.

He being dead yet speaketh. Heb. xi. 4.

VOLUME I.

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1826.

Martin Luther
CONCERNING
CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

THE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IT is usual to preface a work, submitted to the notice of the world, with reasons for its publication. The Translator however desires to say, he has no other reason to assign for making the present “offering,” than that which he has already given in his Proposals for publication—“that from many particularly directing circumstances, he was led to believe it would, under the divine blessing, be useful to the church of God in the present day.”

The character which the work professes to bear is—to deliver **FAITHFULLY** the **MIND** of Luther; retaining, **LITERALLY**, as much of his own **WORDING**, **PHRASEOLOGY**, and **EXPRESSION**, as could well be admitted into the English version—the principles to which the Translator proposed and endeavoured to adhere, in his English version of Luther's profound and invaluable Treatise on the **BONDAGE OF THE WILL**, which has lately been presented to the British Church.

To these introductory observations, the Translator adds nothing more than the following appropriate extract from the Preface written by Melancthon, and prefixed by him to that edition of his beloved Luther's works, which he published at Wirtemberg, from the Press of Seitz in the year 1551, shortly after the death of his Christian brother and fellow-labourer in the ministry of Christ.

“ Let us therefore give thanks unto God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who willed, that by the ministry of his servant Martin Luther, the mire and poison should again be cast out of the fountains of evangelical truth, and the pure doctrine restored to the church. Wherefore, it becomes us and all good men throughout the world, to think of this, and to unite in prayers and desires, and to cry unto God with fervent hearts, that he would confirm in us what he has thus wrought, for his holy temple’s sake.—This, O living and true God, eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author of all things in thy church, this is thy word and promise—“ For mine own sake will I have mercy upon you. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it, that my name be not blasphemed,” Isaiah xlviii.—I cry unto thee with my whole heart, that for thine own glory, and for the glory of thy dear Son, thou wouldst never cease to gather unto thyself from among us, by the preaching of the Gospel, an eternal church. And that, for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was crucified for us and rose again, our Mediator and Intercessor, thy Holy Spirit may in all things rule our hearts, that we may call upon thee in truth, and serve thee acceptably.

—“ And since thou hast created mankind to the end that thou mightest be acknowledged and called upon by all men, and hast for that intent, manifested thyself in so many eminent testimonies, who have borne witness of thee; suffer not this army of witnesses to fail, from whom thy word of truth sounds forth. And since thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, just before his final agony, prayed for us, saying, “ Father, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,” to these prayers of our

High Priest, we desire to join ours, and to entreat thee together with him, that thy word of truth may ever shine among men, and that it may be our guide.—And these were the prayers that we used to hear Luther also put up daily, and it was in the midst of such prayers as these, that his peaceful soul, about the sixty-third year of his age, was called away from his mortal body.

“Posterity possesses many monuments both of his doctrine and of his piety. He published first, his *doctrinal works*. In which he set forth that doctrine which is unto salvation, and indispensable to man, and which instructs the upright concerning repentance, faith, and the true fruits of faith; concerning the use of the sacraments; concerning the difference between the law and the gospel, and between the gospel and philosophy; concerning the dignity of the order politic; and finally, concerning all the principal articles of that doctrine, which must be set forth and maintained in the church. He then published his *works of refutation*: in which he disproved and exposed many errors prejudicial to men. He published moreover his *works of exposition*: which contain many commentaries on the prophetic and apostolic scriptures: in which works, even his enemies confess that he surpasses all the commentaries extant.

“That these are works of great merit, all good men well know. But truly, for utility and labour, all these works together are surpassed by his version of the Old and New Testament: in which there is so much clearness, that the German reading of itself supplies the necessity of commentary. Which version, however, is not quite alone; there are annexed to it annotations of great learning, together with descriptions of the subject-heads,

which give a summary of the divine doctrines contained in them, and instruct the reader in the kind of language which is there used; so that the honest and good heart, may draw the firmest testimonies of the true doctrine from the very fountains.—For it was the great aim of Luther, not to let any rest in his own writings, but to lead the minds of all to the fountain head. He would have us all to hear the voice of God. He wished to see, by that voice, the fire of genuine faith and calling upon God kindled in men, that God might be worshipped in truth, and that many might be made heirs of eternal life.

“ This anxious desire of his, therefore, and these his labours, it becomes us to spread abroad with grateful hearts: and taking him for an example, to remember that it behoves each of us to strive to adorn, according to his ability, the church of God. For to these two ends especially the whole of our life, its studies and designs, should be directed.—First, to promote the glory of God. And secondly, to profit his church.—Concerning the former, St. Paul says, “ Do all to the glory of God.” Concerning the latter, it is said in the 122d Psalm, “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” To which exhortation, there is added, in the same verse, a most sweet promise, “ They shall prosper that love thee.” These commands and promises from above, invite all to receive the true doctrine of the church, to love the ministers of the Gospel, and wholesome teachers, and to unite in desires and devoted endeavours to spread abroad the doctrine of truth, and to promote the concord of the true church of God.—Reader, farewell.—*Wirtemberg, June 1, 1546.*”

HENRY COLE.

London, April 1, 1823.

DEDICATION.

THE following extract, is the conclusion of Luther's letter which accompanied his Treatise on Christian Liberty to Leo X., Pope of Rome; for whom the Treatise was expressly written.—

—“In a word, put no confidence in those who exalt you, but rather in those who would humble you. For this is the way of God's judgments—“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.” Behold how much the successors of Christ are unlike himself! And yet, they desire to be accounted his *vicars*. And I greatly fear that very many of them will be found to be his vicars in an awful reality. For a vicar is one who takes the place of a potentate when he is absent. And if the Pope rule and govern when Christ is absent, that is, not dwelling in his heart, what is such an one, but a vicar of Christ! And what is such a church, but a confused multitude without Christ? And what is such a vicar, but ANTICHRIST!

“I may, perhaps, be deemed insolent for presuming to teach a potentate so mighty: from whom, (as those deadly pests of flatterers around you arrogantly vaunt,) all thrones and seats of judgment should fetch their definitive decision and sentence.—But I follow the example of St. Bernard, in his book to Eugenius “On Consideration;” which every Pope ought to know by heart. Nor do I thus address you so much from a desire of becoming your teacher, as from a duty of that pure and faithful concern, which makes me fear for my friends when all things seem secure and safe around them, and

which will not suffer me to pay regard either to the dignity or humility of their station, intent only upon the consideration of their danger and their benefit. Wherefore, when I see you tossed to and fro in tumult at Rome as upon a sea of perils, with destruction threatening you on every side, and involved in that state of surrounding misery, that you stand in need of the least service from the meanest of your brethren, I do not think it will be an absurd intrusion if I forget, for a moment, your greatness, while I perform an office of charity. I cannot descend to adulation in a matter so momentous and perilous—in which, if you do not consider me to be your greatest, and yet most subservient, friend—there is one that seeketh and judgeth!

“ Finally: That I might not come before you empty, I bring with me this little Treatise, published under the sanction of your name, as an auspicious sign of peace to be established, and of good hope to be realized. In which little work, you may have a taste of those things in which I delight to be engaged; and in which I might be engaged to much greater profit than I now am, if I were not hindered by those impious flatterers around you, as I have hitherto been.—The Treatise is insignificant if you look at its bulk, but if you consider its contents, you will, if I mistake not, find it to be a summary of the Christian life comprised in a narrow compass. As I am but a poor man, I have nothing else wherewith to present you. Nor will you need any thing else, but the gift of the Spirit to understand it. This offering, therefore, together with myself, I commend to your paternity and holiness: whom, may the Lord Jesus preserve unto eternal life.—Amen!”

“ *Wirtemberg, April 1526.*”

CONCERNING

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

CHRISTIAN faith, has appeared to many an easy matter : of whom, not a few have classed it among the moral virtues, nay, have made it merely a sort of attendant on virtue. And this they have done, because they have never proved what it is in their own experience, nor internally tasted its power. Whereas, no one can truly describe it himself, nor really understand it when truly described, unless he has at some time, under the fiery trial of pressing conflicts, tasted the spirit of it in his own soul. And he who has really tasted this, even in the smallest degree, can never write of it, speak of it, think of it, nor hear of it enough : for it is, as Christ calls it, “ a living fountain springing up into everlasting life,” John iv.

As to myself, though I may not boast of an abundant stock of this grace, (for I deeply feel my straitened deficiency,) yet I do trust, that out of the great and various tribulations under which I have been exercised, I have gotten of faith a certain drachm : and that I can therefore treat of it, if not more eloquently, yet certainly more substantially, than any of those learned and subtle ones have hitherto done, in all their laboured disputations : who, after they had done, knew not what they themselves had written upon the subject. But in order to open up this matter the more plainly to simple souls, (since it is for them only I write,) I lay down at the outset these TWO PROPOSITIONS concerning the *bondage* and *liberty* of the Spirit—

- I. The Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none.
- II. The Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Though these two things may seem to be contradictions, yet when they shall be found to harmonize, they will sweetly make for our present purpose. Both these propositions then are of Paul himself, who saith, 1 Cor. ix., “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all.” Again, Rom. xiii. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.” For the nature of love is, to be dutiful and affectionately obedient unto the object beloved. Thus Christ, though Lord of all, was yet “made of a woman, made under the law;” at the same time free, and a servant; at the same time, in the form of God, and in the form of a servant, Gal. iv.

But let us at the beginning, enter into these things more deeply and fully.—Man, then, consists of two natures, spiritual and corporal. In respect of his spiritual nature, which we term the soul, he is called the spiritual, the inner, the new man. In respect of his corporal nature, which we term the flesh, he is called the carnal, the outward, the old man; concerning which the apostle saith, 2 Cor. iv. “Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day.” And hence, from this diversity, contrary things are spoken in the scriptures concerning the same man: because these two men are at continual war with each other, from the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, Gal. v.

PROPOSITION I.

We consider then, FIRST, the *inward man*, with the intent of seeing in what way he can become justified, free, and a true Christian: that is, a spiritual, and inward new man. And it is evident, that no external thing whatever, be its nature or denomination what it may, can be of any avail unto this Christian righteousness and

liberty ; nor, on the other hand, be of any avail to cause unrighteousness or bondage : of which you may at once be persuaded by the following demonstration.

For, what can it avail unto the liberty of the soul, if the body be in health, vigour, and vivacity ? If it eat, drink, and do what it list ? The most abandoned slaves to all sin enjoy these things to the full.—On the other hand, how can a soul in liberty be brought into bondage by ill-health, or captivity, or hunger, or thirst, or any external evil ? Those who most fear God, and enjoy the purest conscience and the most perfect freedom, are afflicted with these things to the utmost.—None of these external things, therefore, reach to the liberty or bondage of the soul.

So also, it can avail nothing unto this liberty, if the body be adorned with holy robes after the manner of priests ; if it be continually in holy places and occupied in holy duties ; if it pray, fast, and abstain from certain meats ; if it perform every holy exercise that is wrought, or can be wrought by the body. Something far beyond all this is necessary unto the righteousness and liberty of the soul ! For all the things just mentioned may be performed by any, even the most wicked, nor would they, after all, be any more than hypocrites !—On the other hand, it cannot injure the liberty of the soul, if the body be clothed in common garments, and continue in common places ; if it eat, and drink as do others ; if it never pray aloud ; if it do none of all those services which, we have just observed, may be done by hypocrites.

In a word, to reject all things :—neither speculations, meditations, nor the greatest devotional efforts of which the human mind is capable, avail any thing. One thing, and that only can effect the life, the righteousness, and the liberty of a Christian—and that is, the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ : as he saith John xi., “ I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me shall never die.” Again, John viii., “ If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” And again, Matt. iv., “ Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

This, then we may consider as a fixed and absolute certainty; that the soul may endure the want of every thing but the Word of God. Deprived of this, it cannot receive benefit from any one thing; but having this, it is rich, wanting nothing: for it is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of strength, of grace, of glory, of all good that passeth understanding! And this is the reason why the prophet, throughout the whole of his Octonary, and in many other places, sighs out so many prayers, cries, and groans, concerning the Word of God!

And hence, as, on the one hand, no greater plague can be inflicted by the anger of God than when he sends a famine of hearing the Word, as in Amos viii.; so, on the other, there can be no greater token of his favour than when he sends his Word: as in Psalm cvii., "He sent his Word and healed them, and delivered them out of their destructions." Nor was Christ sent unto any other office, than that of the Word. Nor was the apostolical, episcopal, nor the whole ministerial order, called and ordained to any other purpose, than the ministry of the Word.

But you will ask which Word of God is this? and how must it be made use of? for there are so many words of God.—I answer, the apostle Paul, Rom. i., explains which it is. The gospel of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was incarnate, and crucified; and who is risen again, and glorified by the Holy Ghost the sanctifier. For, the preaching of Christ, feeds, justifies, sets free, and saves the soul that believeth what is preached. For faith alone is the saving and effectual use of the Word of God: as in Romans x., "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Again, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And again, Romans i., "The just shall live

by his faith." Nor can the word of God be received and embraced by any works whatever, but by faith only. And therefore it is clear, that as the soul needs nothing but the Word unto life and righteousness, it is justified, without any works, by faith only. For if it could be justified by any thing else, it would have no need of the Word; and consequently no need of faith.

And moreover, this faith can by no means consist together with any works: that is, if thou presume to be justified by any works, of any kind or denomination whatever, together with faith. For this would be, to "halt between two opinions:" to "worship Baal," and to "kiss the hand:" which, as Job saith, is the greatest of all iniquity. Therefore, when thou beginnest to believe, thou at the same time beginnest to learn, that all things in thyself are unrighteous, sinful, and damnable: according to that passage, Romans iii., "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, there is none that doeth good, no not one: they are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable." When thou hast known this in thyself, thou wilt feel the necessity of Christ as having suffered and risen again for thee, and of believing in him: that thou mightest, by this faith, become another man, in finding all thy sins forgiven thee, and thyself justified by the merits of another, even of Christ only.

Since, therefore, this faith can have dominion no where but in the inner man, as Paul saith, Rom. x., "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness:" it is evident, that the inner man can be made righteous, set free, and saved, by no external work or circumstance whatever, and that no work whatever can have any thing at all to do with it: even as on the other hand, it is by no external sin or work whatever, but solely by the internal iniquity and unbelief of the heart, that man becomes the guilty and damnable bond-slave of sin. And therefore, it should be the first great aim of every Christian, laying aside all idea of works, to strengthen more and more his faith only, that through the same he might

increase in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus, as having suffered and risen again for him, (as Peter, in his First Epistle, last chapter, teaches:) for it is no other work but this that makes the Christian. So Christ, John vi., when the Jews asked him what they should do that they might “work the works of God,” utterly rejecting all that multitude of works with which he beheld them to be so puffed up, commanded them this one thing, saying, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent; for him hath God the Father sealed.”

Thus faith alone in Christ, is a treasure that passeth all understanding; bringing with itself full salvation, and delivering from every destruction: as it is written in the last chapter of Mark, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This treasure Isaiah beholding, prophesied thus, chap. x., “A short and consummate work hath God decreed to make upon the earth, and the consummate work shall overflow with righteousness.” As though he had said, Faith, which is a short and consummate fulfilment of the law, shall so overflow with righteousness unto them that believe, that they shall have need of nothing else unto righteousness. The same also saith Paul, Rom. x., “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”

But you will ask, how can it be that faith alone justifies, and, without any works, brings in such an abundant treasure of all good, when so many works, ceremonies, and laws, are enjoined us in the scriptures? I answer—before all things hold that in mind which I have just shewn; that faith alone, without any works, justifies, sets free, and saves: as shall be more plainly shewn hereafter.—

In the meantime, I should set things distinctly before thee thus:—The whole scriptures of God are divided into two parts, *precepts* and *promises*. The precepts do indeed teach good things, but those good things which they teach are not at once performed: for though they

shew us what we ought to do, they give us no power to perform the same. Therefore, they were expressly ordained to this end, that they might shew man to himself; that by them he might be brought to know his utter inability to do that which is good, and to despair of all strength in himself: and therefore it is that they are called the Old Testament, which indeed they are. — For example, “Thou shalt not covet” is a precept: by which, we are all brought in guilty as sinners: for there is no one that can be free from coveting, how much soever he may strive against it. And therefore, in order that he may be brought not to covet, and to fulfil the law, he is driven to despair in himself, and to seek that help elsewhere, and in another, which he finds not in himself: as it is said in Hosea xiii., “O Israel, thy destruction is from thyself; and thy only help is in me.” And the effect produced by this one commandment, is produced by all the rest, for they are all alike impossible unto us.

When the man has been taught by the precepts his utter inability, and has become anxious to know in what way he can possibly satisfy the law, (for the law must be satisfied so that not one jot or tittle thereof fail, or he must be damned without hope,) being then truly humbled and brought to nothing in his own eyes, he finds nothing in himself whereby he can become righteous in order to be saved. Then—here comes in to his help the other part of the scripture, the *promises* of God, which bring the glad tidings of the glory of God; and say, if thou wouldst fulfil the law, and not covet, as the law requires, then hearken!—Believe in Christ, in whom are promised unto thee grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things. If thou believe, thou shalt have all things; if thou believe not, thou shalt have nothing. For all the commanded works of the law, (which are impossible with thee, and which are innumerable, and after all of no avail unto salvation,) thou shalt fulfil by this “short consummate work”—by believing! For God the Father hath included all things in faith. So that he who hath this hath all things; and he who hath not this, hath nothing.

Because, God hath included all things in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all, Rom. xi. Thus, the promises of God give freely all that the precepts exact, and fulfil all that the law commands, that all may be of God only, both the precepts and their fulfilment. God alone commands, and God alone fulfils. Therefore, the promises belong to the New Testament ; and the New Testament indeed they are.

And moreover, as these promises are the words of God ; holy, true, righteous, free, peaceable, and full of all good ; it comes to pass, that the soul which cleaves to them with a steady faith, is so united to them, yea wholly absorbed in them, that it not only partakes of, but is saturated and intoxicated with, all their unctuous virtue. For if the touch of Christ healed, how much more shall the very absorbing of the unctuous spirit of the word, into the tender soil of the soul, communicate to the soul all the nature of that word ! And it is in this manner that the soul, by faith alone, without any external works, is, through the operation of the word of God, justified, sanctified, made true, settled in peace, set free, filled with all good, and made in reality the daughter of God : according to that saying, John i., “ To them gave he power to become the sons of God, even unto them that believe on his name.”

From these things it may be plainly understood, how it is that faith is of so much efficacy, and why no works, nor all good works together, are equal unto it. The reason is—no work can cleave to the word of God, nor have any indwelling in the soul. Faith and the word of God alone can have dominion there. And such as the word is in nature, into the same is the soul changed : as iron put into the fire becomes like fire, through the nature of the fire to which it is united.

It is clear, therefore, that the faith of a Christian man sufficeth for all things : and that he has no need of any works whatever unto justification. And then, if he have no need of works, he has no need of the law : and if he have no need of the law, he is certainly freed from the

law: and therefore it is true, that "the law was not made for a righteous man," 1 Tim. i.—This then is that true Christian liberty, even our faith: which does not give us occasion to sit down at ease, or live as we list, but is so ordained, that no one might have any need of the law, or of works, unto righteousness and salvation.

Let this be considered as the *first power* of faith. We will now speak of the *second*. For this also belongs to faith—to have the most high and holy thoughts of him in whom it believeth: that is, to hold him as true, and worthy to be trusted. Nor is there any honour equal unto that estimation of truth and justice, in which we hold him, in whom we fully confide. What can we ascribe unto any one more honourable than truth, justice, and complete and perfect goodness? On the other hand, it is the greatest of all reproaches to speak of any one as a liar, and dishonest, or even to suspect him; which we in reality do, when we do not believe him.

Thus the soul, while it steadfastly believes in God promising, holds him to be true and just: than which opinion, no greater homage can be paid him.—The highest worship of God, is to ascribe unto him truth, righteousness, and whatever we would ascribe unto one in whom we fully confide! This worshipper, is prepared to do all the will of God; he sanctifies his name; he submits himself to be dealt with as it shall seem pleasing unto God; because, he leans entirely upon his promises, not doubting, but that as he is all truth, righteousness, and wisdom, he will manage, order, and do all things for the best. And does not such a soul by this his faith, yield obedience unto God in all things? What precept is there which such an obedience does not abundantly fulfil? What fulfilment can be more perfect than universal obedience? And this obedience is really yielded, not by works, but by faith only!

On the other hand, what rebellion, what impiety must it be! What greater contempt can be put upon God, than not to believe him when he promises! What is it else but to hold him a liar; or, at least, to doubt,

his truth!—That is, for a man to attribute truth unto himself, but lying and vanity unto God! In so doing, does he not deny God altogether, and set up himself in his heart for a self-worshipping idol? And what think ye works can avail done in this impious state of heart, be they never so evangelical and apostolical? Righteously therefore hath God included all, not in wrath, not in lust, but in *unbelief*: lest those, who imagine that they fulfil the law by their chaste and kind works of the law, (which are at best but moral or political virtues,) should presume to expect that they should be therefore saved, when they are all the while included under the sin of unbelief, and must either seek the mercy, or be damned by the justice of God!

But when God sees that truth is ascribed unto him, and that he is honoured by the faith of our heart with all that honour which is due unto him, he in return honours us by imputing unto us truth and righteousness because of this faith only. For it is faith that makes truth and righteousness, by ascribing unto God his own; and in return God rewards that our righteousness with glory! For it is true and just to hold God true and just; and to ascribe this unto him, and confess it, is to be true and just: according to 1 Sam. ii., “Whosoever honoureth me I will glorify him, but they that despise me shall be accounted nought.” So Paul, Rom. iv., saith of Abraham, that his faith was counted unto him for righteousness; because, by it he gave full glory to God: and it shall, for the same reason, be imputed unto us for righteousness also, if we believe.

The *third power* of this most precious faith is that which couples the soul to Christ as a spouse to her husband: by which sacred union, as Paul teacheth, Christ and the soul are made one flesh: and if they be one flesh, and there be a true marriage, yea, by far the most perfect of all marriages, consummated between them (for all human marriages are but the faintest representation of this,) then it follows, that all which belongs to each, both good and evil, becomes common to both. So

that, whatever Christ possesses, the believing soul may lay claim to; and glory in, as her own; and whatever belongs to the soul, Christ takes upon himself as his.

Now let us only meditate on these things compared together, and we shall find them to be unspeakable.— Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sin, death, and damnation. Here, let faith come in between, and it shall come to pass that the sin, death, and hell are laid upon Christ; and his grace, life, and salvation, made the portion of the soul! For he, as the husband, must take unto himself, together with the spouse, all that she brings with her; and impart unto her, all that he possesses. For he who freely gives her his body and himself, how can he not give her all things that are his? And he who takes unto himself the body of his spouse, how can he not take with her all things that are hers!

Here then is brought to light a most sweet view, not of communion only, but of a saving warfare, of victory, of salvation and redemption! For, since Christ is God and man, and such a person as never has sinned, never dies, nor is damned, nay, never can sin, die, or be damned; and since his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, and omnipotent; since, I say, such a person has, by the wedding-ring of faith, made the sin, death, and hell of his spouse common to himself, yea, his own; and acts and suffers under them as if they were his own, and as if he himself had sinned, labouring, dying, and descending into hell, that he may overcome them all; and since, sin, death, and hell, could not swallow up him, it is of necessity certain, that, in the stupendous conflict, they are all swallowed up by him. For his righteousness is greater than all sin, his life is stronger than all death, his salvation more powerful than all hell!

Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of faith in Christ her spouse, becomes free from all sins, secure from death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of her husband Christ. Thus Christ presents unto himself a spouse without spot

or wrinkle, and all glorious through his cleansing her with the washing in the word of life; that is, by faith in the word of life, righteousness, and salvation. And thus he betroths her unto himself in faith, in mercy, in loving-kindnesses, in righteousness, and in judgment: as Hosea saith, chap. ii.

Who then can fully enter into the greatness of this royal marriage? Who can comprehend the riches of the glory of this grace? where this rich and holy husband Christ, takes unto wife this poor, miserable, sinful harlot, redeeming her from all her evils, and adorning her with all his saving benefits! It is impossible now, that her sins should destroy her, for they have all been laid upon Christ, and swallowed up in him; and she has that righteousness in Christ her husband, which she may glory in as her own, and may, with confidence, set against all her sins, yea, against death and hell; and say, 'If I have sinned, yet, my Christ has not sinned in whom I believe: all whose are mine, and mine are his:' as in the Canticles, "My beloved is mine and I am his." This is what Paul saith, 1 Cor. xv., "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord:" that is, the victory over sin and death, as he there shews, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

From these things, you may again understand why it is, that so much is attributed to faith;— that *it* alone fulfils the law, and justifies without any works whatever. For you see that the first commandment, in which it is said, Thou shalt worship one God, can be fulfilled only by faith. For if thou thyself wert nothing else but good works from the sole of the foot even unto the head, yet thou wouldst not be righteous, nor wouldst thou worship God, nor fulfil the first commandment. For God cannot be worshipped, unless there be ascribed unto him truth and the glory of all goodness, as they ought to be ascribed: and this no works can do, but the faith of the heart only. For it is not by working, but by believing, that we glorify God and confess him to be true. On this account it is, that faith alone is the righteousness of a

Christian man, and the fulfilment of all the commandments : for he who fulfils this first commandment, fulfils all the rest without any laborious working.

And moreover, works, as they are things insensible, cannot possibly glorify God, although they may be done, (if done in faith,) to the glory of God. But we are not now inquiring into the quality of the works that are done, but into the person who does them, who produces the works and glorifies God :—and this is, the faith of the heart, the head and substance of all our righteousness. Therefore, the doctrine which teaches that the commandments are to be fulfilled by works, is blind and perilous : for the commandments must be fulfilled before any work is done, and works must follow that fulfilment : as we shall presently hear.

But, in order that we may behold more fully this grace which our inward man hath in Christ, it must be known, that God, under the Old Testament, sanctified unto himself every first-born male. And the first birth was always pre-eminently esteemed, and held in twofold honour above the rest, both in the priesthood and in the kingdom. For the first-born brother was priest, and lord, over all the rest. Under which figure Christ was shadowed forth, the true and only begotten Son of God the Father and the Virgin Mary, the true king and priest ; not according to the flesh, and this world, for his kingdom is not of this world ; he reigns and consecrates in heavenly and spiritual things, which are righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, salvation, &c. Not that all things in earth and hell are not subject to him also, (else how could he preserve and save us from them) but his kingdom does not consist in these things, nor is it of them. Neither does his priesthood consist in the external pomp of robes and gestures, (as that earthly priesthood of Aaron was, and as our ecclesiastical priesthood is in the present day,) but in spiritual things ; in which, by an invisible office in heaven, he intercedes for us before God, and there offers up himself, and does all those things which pertain unto a priest : as Paul describes him unto the Hebrews under the figure of Melchizedec. Nor does

he pray and intercede for us as Priest only, but he teaches us also in the spirit, by the living doctrines of his own Spirit; which two, are the peculiar offices of a priest, as is still represented by earthly priests, in their prayers and visible preaching.

And even as Christ by his first-birthright has obtained these two dignities, so does he impart them and make them common to each of his believing ones; according to the before-mentioned law of matrimony, by which, whatever belongs to the husband, belongs to the spouse: all we therefore who believe in Christ, are *kings* and *priests* in Christ: as Peter saith, "But ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests, that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Peter ii.

The natures of which two privileges are these.—First, as to the *kingdom*, every Christian is, by his faith, so highly exalted above all things, that, in his spiritual power, he is absolute lord of all things. So that, no one thing can possibly hurt him in any way: nay, all things are subject unto him, and compelled to be subservient unto his salvation. As Paul saith, Rom. viii, "All things work together for good unto the elect." Again, 1 Cor. iii., "All things are yours, whether death, or life, or things present, or things to come; and ye are Christ's."

Not that any Christian is ordained to hold, and have dominion over all things, in corporal power, (as certain mad Ecclesiastics every where furiously maintain,) for this dominion belongs to princes and rulers upon earth. And moreover, we find by daily experience, that, in this sense, we are subject to all things, endure many things, and even suffer death: nay, the greater Christian any one is, to the more evils, sufferings, and deaths, is he subjected: as we see in the great first-born king Christ himself, and in all his holy brethren.

The power of which we are speaking, is spiritual: which rules in the midst of enemies, and prevails in the midst of pressing troubles: which is nothing more or less than strength made perfect in my weakness, and all

things turning to my soul's profit: so that the cross, and death itself, are compelled to serve me, and to work together unto my salvation.—This is a high and glorious dignity, a power truly omnipotent, a spiritual dominion! In which, there is nothing, however good or however evil, which shall not work together for my profit, if I only believe. Not, however, that I have any need of these things, (for faith alone sufficeth unto salvation,) but that in them faith may exercise the power and dominion of its liberty.—Behold! this is the unspeakable power and liberty of Christians!

Nor are we the most free of all *kings* only, but *priests* for ever and ever! This is far more glorious than even the kingdom. For by our priesthood, we are worthy to appear in the presence of God, to pray for others, and to instruct each other in the things of God. For these are the offices of priests, and which never can be permitted to any unbeliever. But Christ has obtained these for us, if we believe in him; that, as we are brethren, heirs, and kings together with him, so we may be priests together with him also, having boldness with confidence, by the spirit of faith, to present ourselves before God, crying, “Abba Father,” to pray for each other, and to do all those things, and perform all those offices for each other, which we see to be performed and represented by corporal and visible priests. But he that believeth not, to him nothing can be subservient or work together for good, but he himself is the bond-slave of all things, and all things work together for his destruction: because, he impiously uses all things to his own profit, and not to the glory of God. And therefore, he is not a priest but profane, whose prayer tendeth only unto sin; nor can he ever appear in the presence of God, for “God heareth not sinners.”

Who then can comprehend the greatness of the Christian's dignity! He, by his kingly power, has dominion over life, death, sin, and all things; and by his priestly power, is all-prevalent with God; for God does whatever he asks and desires of him; as it is written,

“He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ; he also will hear their cry, and will save them,” Psalm cxlv. To this glory, certain it is, that he attains not by any works, but by faith only !

From these things, any one may clearly perceive how it is, that a Christian man is free from all things, and above all things, so that he wants no works in order to become righteous and saved ;—because faith alone abundantly supplies the place of all these. And if at any time he should become such a fool as to presume to make himself righteous, free, saved, and a Christian, by any work, that moment he would lose faith, together with all saving benefits. Which folly is strikingly represented in that fable, where the dog, swimming across a stream, and carrying a piece of real flesh in his mouth, is deceived by the shadow of that flesh appearing in the water ; and in attempting, with open mouth, to grasp at that, he loses both the real flesh and the shadow together.

But, here you will ask, if all that are in the church of Christ be priests, by what name shall we distinguish those, whom we now call priests, from the laity ? I answer—there is violation committed in our day upon these appellations, Priest, Minister, Ecclesiastic : they are taken from all other Christians, and given to a certain select rabble who are called by the violated appellation, Ecclesiastics. The holy scripture makes no difference between Christians ; except that, it calls those, who serve others in the ministry of the word, in teaching faith in Christ and the liberty of them that believe, ministers, servants, and stewards : (who are now dignified with the titles of popes, bishops, and lords.) For although it be true that we are all alike priests, yet we all cannot, and if we could, ought not to minister and teach publicly. And therefore Paul saith, 1 Cor. iv., “Let a man so account of us, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

But this dispensation has now degenerated into such a pomp of power, and such a terrific tyranny, that no

empires of nations, nor of the whole world together, will bear any comparison with it: so that one would think the laity were any thing else but Christians. By which utter perversion, it has come to pass, that the knowledge of Christian grace, faith, and liberty, yea, of Christ altogether, has utterly disappeared; and there has succeeded in its place, an intolerable bondage-captivity of human works and ordinances; and, according to the lamentations of Jeremiah, we are made slaves to the most vile of all men that are upon the face of the earth; who, abusing our misery, make us submit to all turpitude and ignominy according to their own lust.

But to return and sum up this first proposition.—I think, from these things, it has been made sufficiently evident, that to preach the works, the life, and the words of Christ in an historical way, as things that once took place, and to form an external mode of life from the knowledge thereof, is not enough to make a Christian; as those preach, who are now considered to be the greatest men. Much less can the teaching of the ordinances of men, and the decrees of the fathers, where Christ is not preached at all, make a Christian. And there are at this day, not a few, who preach and read Christ, in order to move the human passions to condole with him, and to vent an indignation against the Jews: together with many other puerile and effeminate delusions of the same kind.

Whereas Christ ought to be preached to this end—that faith in him may be drawn forth; that he may not only be Christ, but Christ *to me*, and *to thee*; and may work that in us which is spoken of him under the name of Saviour. And this faith is begotten and preserved by this—by preaching why Christ came; what he brought with him, and gave; in what way, and to what end, he is to be received. And this is done, where the liberty which we have in him, is taught; where it is set forth, how it is, that all we who are Christians are kings and priests; how it is, that we are lords of all things; and how it is, that whatever we do, we have a confidence is pleasing and acceptable unto God; as I have before shewn.

And whose heart, hearing these things, is not all gladness within, and sweetened, under the enjoyed consolation, into the love of Christ? To which love, he never can attain by any laws or works. And who is there that can hurt such an heart, or cause such an one to fear? If consciousness of sin, or the horror of death should rush upon him, he is prepared to hope in the Lord: nor is he afraid nor moved at these evil tidings, until he see his desire upon his enemies, Psalm cxii. For he believes that the righteousness of Christ is his; and that his sin, is no longer his, but Christ's. And all sin must be swallowed up before the face of the righteousness of Christ, by faith in him, as we have before observed. Thus he learns with the apostle to triumph over death and sin, and say, "O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. xv., "For death is swallowed up in victory:" not in the victory of Christ only, but ours also; for it becomes ours by faith, and in it we also conquer.

Suffice it to have spoken thus concerning the *inward man*, his liberty, and his glorious righteousness by faith, which needs neither laws nor good works; nay, they tend to the destruction of any one, who should presume to be justified by them.

PROPOSITION II.

Now let us come to the OTHER PART of our subject, the *outward man*.—Here an answer shall be given to all those, who, being offended at the word Faith, and all that is said to exalt it, say, 'If faith do all things, and alone suffice unto righteousness, why then are good works commanded. Contented with faith therefore, let us be at rest, and do no works at all!'—I answer, Not so! ye ungodly, not so! This would indeed be the case if we were renewed altogether, and perfectly and wholly spiritual: but this will not be till in the last day of the resurrection of the dead. As long as we live in the flesh,

we only begin, and grow a little in that which is to be perfected in the life to come. And therefore it is, that the apostle, Rom. viii., calls that which we have in this life "the first-fruits of the Spirit;" intimating, that we shall receive the tithes and fulness of the Spirit, in the life which is to come.

To this part of our subject, therefore, belongs that which we laid down at the beginning as our SECOND PROPOSITION—"The Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." For as to his spirit, which is free, he worketh not; but as to his body, in which he is subject, he worketh all things; and how this is, let us now consider.

Although the Christian man, as I have shewn, is, inwardly, as to his spirit, fully and abundantly justified by faith, having all that he needs to have; (except that this abundantly filling faith itself, must be increased day by day, even unto the life to come,) yet, he still remains in this mortal life upon earth; in which he must, of necessity, govern his own body, and have intercourse with men.—Now here begin good works! Here is no sitting down at ease! Here, certainly, begins a care, that the body, by fastings, watchings, labourings, and other moderate discipline, be exercised and brought into subjection to the spirit; so that it may obey and be conformable to the inward man, and to faith, and may not rebel or hinder; which it is its nature to do, if it be not restrained. For the inner man being by faith created conformable to God, and after the image of God, joys and takes pleasure in him through Christ, in whom such a treasure of all good is laid up for him: and therefore all his concern is, that he may be enabled gladly and willingly to serve God in the freedom of love.—While he strives to do this, behold! he offends a contrary will in his own flesh, which lusts to serve the world and fulfil its own desires. And this, the spirit of faith cannot endure, and will not; and therefore, it struggles with ardent desire to repress and restrain it: accordingly, as Paul saith, Rom. vii., "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of

my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members." And so also in another place, "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest after I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away." And again Gal. v., "They who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

But these works are not to be done with this opinion,—that, by them, any one may become righteous before God; for this false opinion faith will not endure, which alone is righteousness before God; but they are to be done with this view only,—that the body might be brought into subjection and purified from its lusts; so that its eye might never be so much as turned, but with a desire to shun concupiscence. For as the soul is purified by faith and made to love God, it would that all things were purified together with it, especially its own body, that all things might join with it in loving and praising God. Hence it is that the man, from the urgent necessity which he feels in his own body, can never be at ease, but is compelled, on that account, to do many good works in order to bring his body into subjection. And yet, he does not look upon these works as making him righteous before God, but he does them in the freedom of love in obedience to God; having nothing else in view but the divine good pleasure, to which he would be most dutifully conformed in all things.

In this case, every one will be able to judge for himself, and use his own discretion (as they say) as to what measure he ought to mortify his body; for he will fast, watch, and labour, so much, as he shall judge necessary to repress the lasciviousness and concupiscence of the body. But they who presumptuously imagine to become righteous by works, look not to the mortification of concupiscence, but to the works themselves: and if they have done very many and great works, they imagine that they are in a good state, and are become righteous. And they sometimes go so far in this working zeal, as to affect their brain, and destroy their constitution; or at

least to render it unserviceable; which is the greatest folly and ignorance of the Christian life and of faith—to desire to be justified and saved by works, without faith.

But, that what we have said concerning works may be the more easily understood, let us explain the matter by similitudes. — The works of a Christian man, then, justified and saved by the free grace and pure mercy of God, through his faith, ought to be considered in no other light, than the works of Adam and Eve in paradise, and of all their children, would have been, had they never sinned. Concerning which it is said, Gen. ii., “God placed the man whom he had created in paradise, that he might work in it, and keep it.” Now Adam was created of God just, upright, and without sin; so that he had no need of this working and keeping in order to become upright and justified; but God gave him this employment of tilling and keeping paradise, that he might not live at ease; which would have been works of perfect freedom, performed with no other view than doing the good-pleasure of God; not in order to the attainment of righteousness, for that he had already to the full, and the same all we should have inherited by nature.—So it is with the works of the believing man, who, by his faith, is placed again in paradise, and created anew; he needs not works in order to be, or to become, righteous; but, that he might not live at ease, and that he might exercise and preserve his own body, there are works of the same liberty enjoined him; which are to be done, only with a view to the good-will of God. Except that, our graces of Faith and Love, though created anew, not being fully perfected, must be increased; yet, not by works, but by growing in the graces themselves.

Again, for further example—a holy bishop when he consecrates a church, or confirms children, or performs any other part of his official duty, is not consecrated a bishop by the performance of those works: nay, unless he were first consecrated a bishop, no one of those works would be of any avail, but would be foolish, puerile, and ludicrous.—So the Christian being consecrated by his

faith, does good works; but he is not by these made more holy, or made a Christian, for this is of faith alone: nay, unless he first believed and were a Christian, all his works would be of no avail whatever; but would, in truth, be impious and damnable sins.

These two sayings, therefore, are true. — ‘ Good works do not make a good man, but a good man makes good works.’ ‘ Evil works do not make an evil man, but an evil man makes evil works.’ — So that, the substance itself, or person, must always be first good, before all good works; and good works must follow and proceed from the good person: as Christ also saith, “ An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, neither can a good tree bring forth evil fruit.” For it is evident, that the fruits do not bring forth the trees; nor the trees grow out of the fruits; but, on the contrary, the trees bring forth the fruits, and the fruits grow out of the trees. As therefore the trees must, of necessity, exist before the fruits, and the fruits can neither make the trees good nor bad, but on the contrary, such as the trees are such the fruits must be; so, must it also of necessity be, that the person of the man must be good or bad, before he can make a good or bad work, and that, the works do not make him bad or good, but he makes the works bad or good.

The same may be seen in every kind of workmanship. A bad or good house does not make a bad or good builder, but a good or bad builder makes a good or bad house. And, to speak universally, no work can make the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is with the works of men, such as the man is himself, either in faith or unbelief, such is his work; good, if done in faith; if done in unbelief, evil. For as works cannot make the man a believer, they cannot make him righteous: but faith, as it makes him a believer, and righteous, so does it make his works good works.

As, therefore, good works can make no one righteous, and as the man must be first righteous before he can do any good work, it is most manifest, that it is faith alone

in the mere mercy of God through Christ in his word, that fully and gloriously justifies and saves the person ; and that no work, no Christian law whatever, is necessary for a man unto salvation. For by faith he is free from every law ; and whatever he does, he does from pure liberty and freedom ; seeking nothing of advantage or salvation thereby, but only the good pleasure of God ; for he is already full and saved by the grace of God through his faith.

Hence, no good work whatever of the unbeliever availeth unto righteousness and salvation ; even as, on the contrary, it is not any evil work that makes him evil or damnable ; but it is the unbelief that makes the person and the tree evil, and the works evil and damnable also. And therefore, a man's being good or bad, does not arise from any works, but from faith or unbelief : as Sirach testifies, Eccles. x., "The beginning of sin is departing from God : " that is, falling from faith. And Paul also Heb. xi., saith, "He that cometh must believe." And Christ saith the same thing, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt." As though he had said, he who would have good fruit, must begin from the tree, and plant that good. So, he who would do good works, must begin, not by working, but by believing ; since it is this alone that makes the person good. For nothing makes the person good, but faith ; and nothing makes it evil but unbelief !

This indeed is true ; that, in the sight of men, a man is made good or evil according to his works : this however, is only the being outwardly seen and known, who is good, and who is evil : as Christ saith, Matth. vii., "By their fruits ye shall know them." But this is all in appearance and externals, in which very many are deceived ; who taking upon themselves to write of, and teach good works, as the way in which men are justified, at the same time make no mention of faith whatever ; following their own ways ; deceiving and being deceived ; becoming worse and worse ; blind leaders of the blind ; wearying themselves

with many works, and never able to attain unto true righteousness : concerning whom Paul saith, 1 Tim. iiii., “ Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” “ Always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

He therefore that would not err with these blind ones, must look beyond doings, laws, and doctrines of works ; yea, he must turn away his eyes from works altogether, and look to the person, how that can be justified—which can be justified and saved, neither by laws, nor by works, but by the word of God, (that is, the promise of his grace,) and by faith.—That the glory of the divine Majesty might stand maintained ; which saves us, “ not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his own mercy” through our believing the word of his grace.

From these things it may be clearly understood, in what sense good works are to be rejected or embraced, and according to what rule the doctrines of all men concerning works are to be understood. For if works be compared with righteousness, and if thou presume to do them under that perversion of the devil, a false persuasion that by them thou mayest become righteous, they thus impose a necessitous bondage, and destroy both liberty and faith together. Nay, from this false persuasion being added, the works are no longer good, but, in truth damnable ; for they are not done in liberty, and they blaspheme the grace of God, who alone justifies and saves by faith : which works, though they cannot effect, yet they attempt it, and thus presumptuously rush upon the work of grace and the glory of it.

We do not therefore reject good works, but, on the contrary, we strenuously maintain and teach them : for we do not condemn the works for themselves, but for that impiously added false opinion of seeking righteousness by them : by which, they are made to have the appearance of good only, when in reality they are not good ; and thus, by them, men are deceived themselves, and deceive others, as ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing.

And this devil, this perverse opinion concerning works, where there is no real faith, is insuperable; for, it cannot be beaten out of those holy workmen, until faith its destroyer come and plant its kingdom in the heart. Nature herself cannot drive it out, nor even know what it is: nay, she considers it to be a most holy and obedient will. And where custom has long prevailed and confirmed this depravity of nature, (as is the case under wicked teachers,) it is an evil incurable, and seduces and sends thousands to irremediable perdition.

Wherefore, although it is good to preach and write of repentance, confession, and satisfaction; yet, if there be a stopping here, and no going on to teach faith, these doctrines are, without doubt, delusive and devilish. Hence Christ, together with his servant John, not only said, "Repent ye," but added the word of faith, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."—For not one part of God's word only, but both must be preached: new, as well as old; must be brought forth out of the treasure: the voice of the law, as well as the word of grace. The voice of the law must be sounded forth, that men may be alarmed and brought to a knowledge of their sins, and then converted unto repentance and newness of life. But there must not be a stopping here: for that would be, to wound without binding up; to smite, without healing; to kill, without making alive; to bring down to the gates of hell, and not to raise up; to cast down, without exalting. Therefore the word of grace and of the promise of remission of sins must be preached to teach and build up faith; without which, the law, contrition, repentance, and every thing else, will be taught and wrought in vain.

There still remain, indeed, preachers of repentance and grace, but they do not set forth the law of God and the promise in that way, and with that spirit, that their hearers may learn whence repentance and grace come: for repentance comes by the law, but faith or grace by the promise of God: as the apostle saith, Rom. x., "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of

Christ." Hence it is, that the man, who, by the threatenings and fear of the divine law, is brought low, and cast down into the knowledge of himself, is comforted and raised up by faith in the divine promise: as in Psalm xxx., "Weeping shall endure until the night, and joy until the morning."—So far have we spoken concerning works in general, and those also which the Christian works in his *own body*.

We will now, in the last place, speak of those works which he works toward *his neighbour*.—For man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body, and to work in it only, but he lives for all men upon the earth; yea, he lives for others only, and not for himself; for he brings his body into subjection, to the very end that he may be able to serve others more sincerely, and more freely: as Paul saith, Rom. xiv., "None of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself; for he that liveth, liveth unto the Lord; and he that dieth, dieth unto the Lord." And therefore, it is impossible that he can live at ease in this life, and without doing works toward his neighbours; for he must of necessity converse, act, and have intercourse with men; even as Christ was made in our likeness, and found in fashion as a man, and had intercourse with men: as Baruch iii. saith.

But yet he has no need of these things unto righteousness and salvation. Therefore, in all his works he ought to be in this mind, and to have only this view—that, in all things whatever he does, he serve and profit others; having nothing before his eyes, but the necessity and profit of his neighbour. For thus the apostle commands us to labour with our hands, "that we may have to give to him that needeth." Whereas he might have said, that we may have wherewith to nourish ourselves—but no! he saith also "him that needeth." For it is a part of Christianity to take care of the body for this very end, that by its health and powers we may labour, earn, and lay up that, which may supply the necessity of those who are in need; that thus, the member that is strong may serve the member that is weak; that we may be the sons

of God, feeling and labouring for each other, bearing each others burthens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ:

Behold, this is the true Christian life ! Here is the true " Faith which worketh by love ; " that is, which goes forth with joy and delight in the work of " perfect freedom ; " it serves its neighbour freely and spontaneously, because its own treasure is richly filled, with the overflowing abundance which it possesses by faith.

Hence Paul, when he had made it evident to the Philippians, how rich they were by the faith of Christ, in which they had possession of all things, goes on to admonish them, saying, " If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, fulfil ye my joy :—that ye be like minded ; having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind ; doing nothing through contention or vain glory, but each in humblemindedness esteeming other better than himself ; and each considering, not his own things, but the things of another." Here we see plainly, that the Christian life, is, by the apostle, made to consist in this—directing all our works for the benefit of others ; because, each one so abounds by his faith, that all his other works, yea, his life itself, are but superabounding blessings, which he may devote with spontaneous benevolence to the service and benefit of his neighbour.—He then, moreover, brings forward Christ as an example, saying, " Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Nevertheless, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death."—This most healthful admonition has been obscured from us by those, who, not at all understanding these apostolical terms, " form of God," " form of a servant," " fashion" and " likeness of men," have made this passage refer expressly to the divine and human natures. Whereas the apostle's meaning is, that Christ, though he was full in his form of God, and abounding

in all good, so that he wanted no work or suffering in order to his becoming righteous and saved, (for he had all these things immediately from the beginning of himself); yet, was not puffed up with these, nor lifted up above us, nor did arrogate to himself a certain power over us, (although he might have done that by right;) but that, on the contrary, he condescended so to labour, suffer, and die, that he might become like other men, and in form and fashion nothing more than a man, as though he had need of these things, and had nothing of the form of God; and that, he did all this for us, that he might serve us, and that all those things might become ours which he did in this form of a servant.

So the Christian, being by his faith complete and full, like Christ his head, ought to be satisfied with this "form of God" which he has obtained by faith:—(except that, as I have before observed, he ought to increase this same faith until it be perfected; for this faith is his life, his righteousness, his salvation; preserving his person and rendering it acceptable, and making him a partaker of all that Christ possesses; as we have shewn before, and as Paul affirms Gal. i., saying, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God:")—but yet, although he is thus free from all works, he ought, nevertheless, in this his liberty, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of men, to be found in fashion as a man, to serve, to help, and in all things to do unto his neighbour, as he sees God has done, and still does, for Christ's sake, unto him: and that freely, and without any thing else in view than doing the good-will of God.—He ought to think thus with himself—Behold! here am I an unworthy and condemned wretch, and my God has, of his own pure and free mercy, without any deserving on my part, given unto me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation: so that, I want no one thing else whatever, but faith to believe that this really is so. Unto such a Father, therefore, who has more than filled me with these his inestimable riches,

what shall I render? Shall I not freely, gladly, with all my heart, and with spontaneous desire, do whatever I know is acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight? Surely, then, I will give myself as a certain Christ to my neighbour, even as Christ has given himself to me. I will do nothing in this life, but that which shall be to my neighbour's service, profit, or edification; and that, because by faith, I possess an abundance of all good in Christ.

Thus you see, from faith, flow love and gladness in the Lord; and from love, a happy, willing, and free spirit to serve a neighbour spontaneously; and that, without any regard to gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss. Nor, in what it does, has it any eye to gaining the favour of men, nor does it make any distinction between friends and enemies, nor has it any respect to the grateful or ungrateful; but with the utmost freedom and willingness, it devotes both itself and its property, whether they prove to be lost upon the ungrateful, or given to the deserving. And even as the Father of this free son does, distributing freely and abundantly all things to all, "causing his sun to rise upon the just and upon the unjust;" so the son does nothing, and suffers nothing, but with that free gladness in which he delights, through Christ, in God, who has freely given him such exceedingly great things.

You see, therefore, that when we once know those exceedingly great and precious things, (as Peter saith) which are freely given unto us, love is thereupon largely shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost: under the influence of which, we are free and happy, all-affecting workmen, overcomers of all tribulation, the servants of our neighbours, and yet, nevertheless, lords of all things. Whereas, those who know not these things as freely given unto them through Christ, to them, Christ is born in vain: these, wander in the ways of working, and shall never attain unto a knowledge and taste of these things. As therefore our neighbour has necessity, and stands in need of our abundance; so we once had

necessity before God, and stood in need of his mercy. And as our heavenly Father has freely supplied our necessities in Christ; so we ought, by our body and its industry, freely to supply the necessity of our neighbour, and each to become to the other a certain Christ; that we may be all as one in Christ, and Christ one in us all; that is, that we may be true Christians.

Who then can comprehend the riches and the glory of the Christian life! It possesses and can do all things wanting nothing itself; the royal conqueress of sin, death and hell; and yet, at the same time, an handmaid humbly subservient and profitable to all! But this kind of Christian life, alas! in this our day, is scarcely known, preached, or sought after, throughout the whole world: so that, we have ourselves utterly forgotten our own name, why we are, and are called, Christians! But surely we are so called from Christ, not absent from us, but dwelling within us; that is, by our believing in him, and becoming, through an union of love, a Christ to each other, doing unto our neighbours as Christ does unto us. Whereas now, by the introduction of the doctrines of men, we are taught to seek nothing but merits, rewards, and the things of self; and of Christ, we have made nothing but an exactor by far more rigid than even Moses himself.

Of this same faith the Blessed Virgin, above all others, has afforded us an example. She, as it is recorded Luke ii., was purified according to the law of Moses, after the custom of all women, even when she was not bound by any such law, and had no need of being purified; to the law, nevertheless, she subjected herself willingly, and with free love, submitting to be made like unto other women, lest she should offend or despise them. She was not therefore justified by this work, but, being justified, she did it in freedom, and liberty. After the same manner ought our works to be done, not in order to our becoming justified thereby, but, being first justified by faith, we ought to do all things freely and cheerfully for the sake of others.

After the same example also Paul circumcised his disciple Timothy: not because he had need of circumcision unto righteousness, but that he might not offend or despise those Jews who were weak in faith, and who could not yet receive the liberty of faith. But on the contrary, when they contemned the liberty of faith, and urged circumcision as necessary unto righteousness, he resisted them, and would not suffer Titus to be circumcised; Gal. ii. And as in the one instance, he was careful not to offend or despise the weakness of any one in the faith, bearing with them for a time; so, in the other, he would not suffer the liberty of faith to be offended and despised by hardened justiciaries: thus persevering in the middle way, sparing the weak for a time, but resisting the hardened unto the end, that he might convert all to the liberty of faith. With the same mind ought our works to be done, that we may receive them that are weak in the faith, as we are admonished, Rom. xiv., but resist hardened task-masters determinately unto the end: of which we shall speak more largely hereafter.

So also Christ himself, Matth. xvii.—When the tribute money was demanded of his disciples, he discoursed with Peter concerning it; asking him, whether the sons of kings were not free from paying tribute? Peter answered in the affirmative. Nevertheless, he commanded him to go the sea: saying, “lest we should offend them, go thou, and the fish that first cometh up, take; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them, for me, and for thee.”—This example sweetly makes to our purpose; in which, Christ calls himself and his disciples free, and the sons of the King, who could stand in need of nothing: nevertheless he willingly submits himself, and pays tribute. As much, therefore, as this work was necessary and profitable for Christ unto righteousness and salvation, just so much are all the other works of himself and his, available unto righteousness: for they are all free works, and follow righteousness already possessed, being done

only in conformity to the custom of, and for an example to, others.

Of the same nature are those admonitions which Paul gives Rom. xiii. and Titus iii., that Christians should be “subject to the higher powers,” and, “prepared unto every good work :” not in order to become righteous thereby, for they are already righteous by faith ; but that, by these works they may, in the liberty of the spirit, serve their neighbours, and the higher powers, and be conformed to their will in all the freedom of love.

And such ought to be the works of all colleges, monasteries, and priesthoods : that each one should perform the duties of his profession and station, not with a view of becoming righteous thereby, but solely of bringing his body into subjection, as an example unto others, who have need to mortify their bodies also. And then, moreover, that he might solely yield obedience unto others, by an humble conformity to their will, in the freedom of love : having, nevertheless, this ever most carefully in mind, that no one, through a vain confidence, presume to become righteous, meritorious, and saved, by these things, which, as I have repeatedly shewn, are by faith alone.

Whoever therefore has this knowledge, may easily, and without danger, conduct himself through all those countless ordinances and precepts of the pope, of bishops, monasteries, churches, princes, and magistrates : which some ignorant pastors so urgently enforce, as though they were necessary unto righteousness and salvation, calling them the ordinances of the church, when indeed they are nothing less. But the free Christian will say thus—I will fast, I will pray, I will do this thing and the other, which is commanded of men, not because it is necessary unto my righteousness and salvation, but because I will therein conform myself to the pope, or the bishop, or that community, or that magistrate, or to my neighbour, for an example : yea, I will do and suffer all things, after the example of Christ, who did and suffered much more

of me, (though he himself needed none of those things ;) being made under the law for me, when he was not under the law. And even if tyrants should exact these things of me by force and unjust authority, yet, I will not rebel, provided that it be not against the glory of God.

From all these observations, then, any one will be enabled to form a right judgment of, and to make a faithful distinction between, all works and laws ; and discern who are blind and ignorant, and who are true and faithful pastors. For whatever work is not taught to these ends only, either to the mortifying of the body, or to the profit of our neighbour, (provided that nothing be enforced against the glory of God,) is neither a good work, or a Christian work. And hence, I very much fear, whether many, or indeed any, of the collegiate, monastic, sacramental, and ecclesiastical duties of the present day, have any thing at all of Christianity in them. And

may add to these, all the fastings, and particular prayers to certain saints ; I very much fear, I say, whether in all these things, we are not seeking our own profit only, and thinking at the same time, that by these things our sins are washed away and salvation found : and thus, the Christian liberty is utterly destroyed : which ever comes to pass through an ignorance of the Christian faith and liberty.

This blind ignorance and suppression of liberty is, moreover, sedulously confirmed by those innumerable, totally blinded pastors, while they seduce and urge people on to these devoted services, by extolling them in the highest, and puffing them off with their forgivenesses, but never teaching faith. But let me give thee this counsel— if thou wouldst at all pray, or fast, or found churches, (as it is called,) take heed that thou do it not with a view of obtaining thereby to thyself any advantage, either temporal, or eternal : for thou wilt thus do an injury to thy faith, which alone furnishes thee with all things : and therefore, thy care should be, how thy faith only may be increased, whether exercised in working or in suffering. Give, therefore, what thou givest, freely and willingly,

to the end that others may be increased and benefitted by thy bounty : thus thou wilt be a truly good man and a Christian. For what are all those superabounding works to thee, which are wrought in the mortifying of thy body, when thy treasure already runneth over by thy faith, in which God hath given thee all things ?

Behold ! then, by this rule, whatever good things we have received of God, ought to flow from one to the other, and become common ; and every one should put on his neighbour, and so conduct himself toward him, as if he were in his stead. For all things have flowed, and still continue to flow, unto us from Christ, who so put on us, and wrought for us, as if he himself had been what we are ; and from us they flow unto all that have need of them. And hence, it becomes me to present my faith and righteousness before God in praying for the pardon and the covering of the sins of my neighbour ; which I ought so to take upon myself, and so to labour and travail under, as though they were my own : for so Christ did for us. This is true love, and the true rule of the Christian life ; and this true and real life there will be, where there is true and real faith. Hence the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii., makes this a property of love, that she “ seeketh not her own.”

We conclude, therefore, that the Christian man liveth not in himself, but in Christ, and in his neighbour, or, he is not a Christian at all : in Christ by faith, in his neighbour by love. By faith, he is raised above himself into God ; and again, by love, he is humbled below himself into his neighbour ; yet, ever standing in God and his love : as Christ saith, John i., “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

Thus have I sufficiently shewn what Christian liberty is : which, as you see, is spiritual, and real : making our hearts free from all sins, commands, and laws whatever : as Paul testifies, 1 Tim. i., “ The law was not made for a righteous man.” This is as far above all other external

liberties, as the heavens are higher than the earth; and may Christ enable us to understand it, and hold it fast. Amen!

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion.—On account of those, who, although things be never so well spoken, are sure to pervert every thing by a wilful misunderstanding, we will add the following; if peradventure they will understand that.—There are very many, who, hearing this liberty of faith, immediately abuse it to an occasion of the flesh, taking it for granted at once, that all things are lawful unto them, and having no desire to be free and Christians, in any other way, than in contemning, and speaking evil of, all human ceremonies, ordinances, and laws. As though they were therefore Christians, because they refuse to fast on certain days, or chuse to eat meats while others fast; or, because they omit all forms of prayer, and contemptuously deride all ordinances of men, while they are at the same time themselves passing by all the weighty essentials of the Christian religion.—These, again, are most obstinately resisted, by those in the other extreme, who are laboriously striving for salvation, by a devoted observance and reverence of human ceremonies only. As though they would therefore be saved, because they fast on stated days, or abstain from meats, or say certain prayers; extolling in the highest the ordinances of the church, and of the fathers, and at the same time, setting entirely at nought those things which are the essentials of our faith. Both of these therefore are evidently reprehensible: because, while they are each contending with so much noise for trifles and non-essentials, they are both passing by the weightier matters that are essential unto salvation.

How much more rightly does the apostle Paul teach us to walk in the middle way, and condemn both erroneous extremes; saying, “Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not,

judge him that eateth," Rom. xiv. Here you see, those who omit and speak evil of ceremonies, not from holy principle, but from mere contempt, are rebuked by the apostle, where he admonishes them, not to "despise;" seeing it is knowledge that puffs them up. On the other hand, he admonishes those others who zealously resist these, not to "judge;" for neither of them are, in the meantime, observing that charity which edifieth. Wherefore, upon these points, we must be guided by the scripture: which directs us, neither to turn to the right hand nor to the left, but to follow the righteous judgments of the Lord, which alone rejoice the heart. For as no one is righteous because he obeys, and cleaves to, works, rites and ceremonies; so neither will any one therefore be accounted righteous, because he omits and despises them altogether.

For we are not, by faith in Christ, freed from works, but from the false opinion of works: that is, from the ignorant presumption of seeking to become righteous by works. For it is faith that delivers, rules, and keeps our consciences: under the experience of which, we know that righteousness lies not in works, although works ought not to be, and cannot be, utterly excluded. For as, without meat and drink and the universal exercise of this mortal body, we cannot exist, although our righteousness lies not in these things but in faith, and yet, these things cannot, on that account, be utterly excluded and despised; so are we compelled, from the nature and necessity of this mortal life, to remain in the world, although we become not righteous thereby. "My kingdom (said Christ) is not from hence:" that is, *of* this world. But he did not say, my kingdom is not *here*: that is, *in* this world. And so Paul saith: "For though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh," 2 Cor. x. Again, Gal. i., "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Therefore, as to our acting, living, and being in the midst of works and ceremonies, the nature of this life, and the due care and government of our bodies, of necessity re-

quire it; although we become not righteous by these things, but by faith in the Son of God.

The Christian, therefore, must here hold the middle way, and have ever before him these two kinds of men. For he will come in contact, either with stiffnecked and hardened ceremonialists, who, like deaf adders, will not hear of the true liberty, but urgently enforce, without faith, and insist upon, their works and ceremonies, and boast of them as righteousness: like the Jews of old, who would not understand that they might do well. These must be resisted, opposed, and determinately offended; lest, by this impious opinion, they should deceive numberless others together with themselves. Before the eyes of these, we should eat meats, exclude fastings, and do other things in defence of the liberty of faith, which they consider to be the greatest sins. Of these we are to say, "Let them alone, they be blind, and leaders of the blind." For it was in this spirit that Paul would not suffer Titus to be circumcised when these urged the necessity of it; and Christ defended his disciples in their plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day. With many other examples of the same kind.

—Or, he will meet with the simple, the unexperienced, the ignorant, and the weak in faith (as Paul calls them) who cannot yet receive this liberty of faith, even though they would. These must be spared lest they should be offended; and their infirmity must be borne with till they shall have been more fully taught. And because they do not act and think wrong from hardened malice, but from weakness of faith alone, we must, to avoid giving them offence, observe fastings and other things which they consider to be essential matters: for this true charity requires, which hurts no one, but serves all. For the weakness of these, is not from their own fault, but from the fault of their pastors, who have taken them captive and shamefully entreated them, by the snares and influence of their traditions; from which they must be delivered and healed by the doctrine of faith and liberty: so the apostle, Rom. xiv., "If my

meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth." And again, "I know that through Christ there is nothing unclean, but to him that thinketh it to be unclean—but it is evil to that man who eateth with offence."

Wherefore, although we must determinately resist these teachers of traditions, and sharply contend against the laws of popes, by which they would break in upon the liberty of the people of God; yet, we must spare those weak and fearful ones, whom these wicked tyrants hold captive under their laws, until they shall be disentangled from them. Therefore, resolutely contend against the wolves and for the sheep; but not against the sheep at the same time; which thou wilt do, if thou inveigh against the laws and lawgivers, and yet, at the same time, bear with them in the weak, lest they should be offended, until they themselves shall discover the tyranny they are under, and come to the knowledge of their liberty.

But if thou wilt use thy liberty, do it in secret: as Paul saith Rom. xiv. The faith that thou hast in thine own experience, have before God; but take heed that thou use it not before the weak. On the other hand, use the same before the tyrants and stiffnecked, to the open contempt of them, and that, with the utmost firmness of determination; that they themselves may know that they are under sin, and that their laws are of no avail unto righteousness; nay, that they had no right whatever to make those laws.

Since, therefore, this life cannot go on without ceremonies and works; nay, since the heated and inexperienced age of young persons has need to be curbed and guarded by these restraints; and since each one must, by the same means, mortify his own body; a minister of Christ must be prudent and faithful: that he may so rule and teach the people of Christ in all these things, that their conscience and faith be not offended, and that no false opinion or root of bitterness spring up in them, and thereby many be defiled, (as Paul warns the Hebrews :) that is, that they lose not faith, and begin to be

defiled by a false opinion of works, as that they are by them to become righteous. Which evils soon take place, and defile many, unless faith be perseveringly insisted on ; nor can they possibly be avoided where faith is buried in silence, and the ordinances of men only, inculcated : which has hitherto ever been done by those pestilent, impious, soul-murdering traditions of our popes, and the opinions of our theologians, who have, in these nets, dragged souls innumerable into hell : so that you may plainly see they are Antichrist !

In a word, as poverty in the midst of riches, faithfulness in the midst of business, humility in the midst of honours, abstinence in the midst of banquets, chastity in the midst of pleasures, so, the righteousness of faith is in peril in the midst of ceremonies : “ Can a man (says Solomon) carry fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned ? ” Prov. vi. And yet, as we must be in the midst of riches, of business, of honours, of banquets, of pleasures, so must we be in the midst of ceremonies ; that is, perils. And further, as it is absolutely needful that infant boys should be brought up under the care, and in the bosoms of young women, to preserve their lives ; with which young women, nevertheless, it would be dangerous to their salvation for them to be familiar when arrived at the age of manhood ; even so, men of a heated and inexperienced age, must be restrained and brought into subjection by the close, yea, even iron restraints of ceremonies, lest their thoughtless mind should rush headlong into vices : although, at the same time, it would be perdition to them if they should always continue under these restraints, from an opinion of becoming righteous by them. For they are rather to be taught, that they were not thus incarcerated, to the end that they might thereby become righteous or meritorious, but, that they might be restrained from evil, and be the more easily trained up to the righteousness of faith ; which, before, through the impetuosity of their age, and the need of its being restrained, they could not receive.

Wherefore, ceremonies, in the Christian life, are to

be considered in no other light, than those preparatory scaffoldings are by builders and artificers, which are erected to assist in the work and building; which are not prepared as being of any value in themselves, or as designed to remain, but because the work and building cannot go on without them; for when the building is finished, they are laid aside. Here, you see, the scaffoldings themselves are not despised, nay, most carefully attended to; but it is the false opinion of them that is despised, because no one imagines that they are the real and durable edifice. Thus, if any one should be so consummately ignorant, as to regard nothing more during the whole of his life, than the erecting of these preparatory scaffoldings in the most sumptuous, diligent, and persevering manner, and should never once think of the real edifice, but be pleased with, and boast of, his attention to these mere temporary props and scaffoldings; would not every one pity his madness, judging, that after such a wonderful expense, some mighty edifice would surely have appeared!

Therefore, we do not despise ceremonies or works, nay, we carefully attend to them; but it is the false opinion of works that we condemn, that no one might imagine that it is righteousness: as the hypocrites do, who fix and spend their whole lives on these devoted services, and, after all, never attain unto that for which they are performed: or, as the apostle saith, “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,” 2 Tim. ii. For they seem to have a desire to build, and prepare themselves to do it, but never build after all: and thus, they remain in a “form” of godliness, and never attain unto the “power” thereof.

And yet, at the same time, they please themselves in these devoted services, yea, and judge all others, whom they do not see to glare in the same pompous show of works. Whereas, had they an unctuous experience of faith, they might, with these gifts of God thus squandered and abused, do something considerable to the salvation of themselves and others. But since human nature, or

natural reason, (as it is called,) is naturally superstitious, and is ever proposing to itself certain laws and works, under the imagination of attaining unto righteousness thereby; and since, moreover, from the custom of all earthly legislators, it is inured to, and confirmed in, this same propensity; it is impossible that it should, by any power of its own, free itself from that working bondage, into the knowledge of the liberty of faith.

Therefore, we have need of prayer, that the Lord would draw us and make us teachable of God; that is, passively receptive of God's teaching: and that he would, as he has promised, write his laws in our hearts: for without this, we must perish. For unless he himself teach us inwardly this "wisdom hidden in a mystery," nature cannot but condemn it and judge it heretical, because it is offended at it and accounts it foolishness. As we find it happened unto the prophets and apostles of old; and the same treatment I, and all like me, meet with at this day from blind and ungodly popes and their flatterers. On whom, together with us, may God have mercy and lift up the light of his countenance upon them; that we might know his way upon the earth, his saving health among all nations, who is blessed for ever. Amen!

End

ANNO 1520.

EXPOSITION
OF
THE FIFTY-FIRST PSALM.

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord."

THIS
EXPOSITION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PSALM,
BY
THE REVEREND FATHER MARTIN LUTHER,

WAS PUBLISHED FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST AND THE
EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

I EXPOUNDED, in the last spring, the Second Psalm concerning Christ as King—his spiritual and celestial kingdom; how it is received by this world, how it is afflicted and torn by kings and people; and yet, nevertheless, conquers and triumphs.—Now, I purpose an Exposition of the Psalm, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord,” which instructs us concerning repentance. Not, however, that I consider myself able to give an Exposition adequate to the contents of this Psalm; for I confess that I have not fully entered into the spirit which here speaks; but I have undertaken it only, that we might have an occasion and a subject matter for meditation and instruction, that I myself, together with you, may become a learner, and may depend upon the Spirit’s teaching; and whatever he shall be pleased to give, we will receive and be thankful for it.

The understanding of this Psalm is, on many accounts, both necessary and useful; for it embraces the doctrines of the essential articles of our religion—of repentance, of sin, of grace, of justification; and also, of that worship which we are to render unto God. These are divine and heavenly things, which, unless they be taught by the great Spirit himself, cannot possibly enter into the heart of man. Hence we see, that, although this doctrine has been agitated by our adversaries with all their efforts, and in many and immense volumes, yet there is no one out of them all, who really knows what repentance is, what sin is, or what grace is: these are to them certain terms, or

dreams only, some mere ideas of which have flashed across their sight and understanding. And the cause of all this darkness and ignorance is this:—the true knowledge of these things does not depend upon the understanding and wisdom of human reason, nor is it (so to speak) born at home; that is, it does not grow naturally in our hearts, but is revealed and given from heaven. For who among natural men could so speak of repentance, and the remission of sins, as the Holy Spirit speaks in this Psalm?

Hence, this Psalm is commonly entitled “The Psalm of Repentance,” and is celebrated above all the rest, as being used in the services and daily prayers of churches; and he who first affixed to the Psalm this title, doubtless knew something of its contents. But as to the multitude in general, who sing and pray it over in their performance of those work-services enjoined by bishops, they know nothing whatever about it. They apply this Psalm to the repentance of works, or to actual sin, which they define to be, ‘a word, an act, or a thought against the law of God.’ But this definition is by far too contracted, to set forth before the eyes of men the magnitude and power of sin. Sin must be looked into much more deeply than this; sin or sinfulness must be set forth much more clearly; for it is not enough to confine it to the outward act (as it is termed.)

From this error—the not understanding what sin is, has arisen, as is always the case, another error—the not understanding what grace is. It has happened, therefore, that in raising up trembling consciences, and in comforting them against the fears of death and the judgment of God, these men have been utterly useless. For how can that man give consolation, who does not know what grace is? And therefore it was, that they fell into those follies of recommending to persons labouring under the burthens of their consciences, hoods, rules, and other like absurdities,

whereby they believed that God would be appeased. But these are proofs sufficiently manifest, that they rightly understood neither grace nor sin, and that they taught a mere natural theology, without the word of God.

In the same way did they teach repentance also—that men should recount all their transgressions of the past year, grieve for them, and atone for them by satisfaction. But, I pray you, does the judge therefore not hang the thief because he hears him confess his theft, and sees him grieve on account of it? And yet, these fellows imagine, that satisfaction can be made unto God, by their feigning this grief, wearing other garments, changing their deportment, and altering their food!

Wherefore, the Exposition of this Psalm will be particularly useful upon these points. We may from it learn to understand these essential articles of our doctrine, and may be enabled skilfully and weightily to confute our adversaries, who thus impurely dispute in matters of so much importance. For I have learnt by my own experience, in times when my conscience has been in distress, that all their profane disputations can give no relief whatever. I have therefore often exhorted the church to the giving of thanks for this unspeakable gift of the Word and pure doctrine, and that all such darkness is driven away by the clear light of the Word shining.

To come then to the Psalm.—We have here delivered the doctrine concerning true repentance. There are, in true repentance, two things:—the knowledge of sin, and the knowledge of grace. Or, to use terms of more common acceptation,—the fear of God, and a trust in his mercy. These two parts of repentance David so sets forth in this prayer of his, as though they were represented in a picture. In the beginning of the Psalm, we see him labouring under the knowledge of his sin, and the burthen of his conscience.

In the end, he comforts himself from his trust in the goodness of God, and promises that he will instruct others also that they might be converted. Hence it plainly appears, that the prophet, in this Psalm, wished, for a particular end, to leave the true wisdom of the divine religion explained in sound words and in a sound sense; that we might learn therefrom what sin is, what grace is, and what true repentance is.

But there are also other psalms of this kind, as the psalm, "Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven." And also that, "Out of the depths have I cried." For David is particularly apt in this kind of doctrine: yet so, that he remains a learner with us in the experience of this doctrine: because all men, how much soever they may be gifted with the Holy Spirit, still remain learners of the Word, still remain beneath and within the Word, and still find, in their experience, that they can scarcely imbibe one drop out of the immense ocean of the Spirit.

Having thus spoken, in a very few words, of the argument and order of the Psalm, I will now speak also of its *title*.—The history of it is well known to be from 2 Sam. chap. xii. And I have no doubt, that this title gave occasion to the schoolmen to understand it as having reference to the person of David only, and to his actual sins; since David seems to speak alone in his own person, and concerning his own sins of adultery and murder.—It is a wonder that they did not teach also, that this Psalm is to be used under this sin only. It is a wonder that they permitted it to be used in prayer, as an *example*, under all sins. For it is thus that Paul saith, the Lord Jesus has shewn forth in me an "example" unto all who shall believe in him. Whereas, all who should believe in him might not be persecutors of the church. But Christ shewed forth in Paul his long-suffering, his clemency, his infinite mercy, that others might not despair under their sins. In the same manner also these men, have

set forth this Psalm as an *example* for prayer under all sins, although they understand it as referring only to the actual sin of David, who is mentioned in the title of it.

But we must go much farther than this : we must not confine it to these external sins, but must consider it as penetrating into the whole nature, the fountain-spring, and the origin of sin. For the Psalmist is speaking of sin altogether ; of the root of sin, not of the external act only ; for that is only, as it were, the fruit which proceeds from the tree and root of sin. For when he exclaims that he “was conceived in sin,” this certainly does not refer to adultery only, but to the whole nature as defiled by sin. And yet, it does not at all militate against this interpretation, that David mentions his actual sin as an example : for in this outward act, more sins are signified than his one sin with Bathsheba. He adds to his adultery, the sin of lying dissimulation : for he pronounces the man who took away the ewe lamb from his poor neighbour, to be worthy of death, while he himself would not see his own sin in the murder of Uriah and the rape of his wife, but wished still to appear holy and a lover of justice and equity. This was doubling his sin. Moreover, he not only thus coloured over the shameful murder of Uriah, but occasioned the death of other Israelites, and caused also the name of the Lord to be blasphemed. And thus, having broken the fifth and sixth commandment, he sinned against the first, the second, and the third also. Nor would he have left the fifth commandment, which respects duty to parents, unbroken, if he had resisted his adulterous desires.

With the sin of blasphemy, indeed, God most particularly charges him : “Thou hast given occasion to the children of Ammon to blaspheme.” For at their slaughter of David’s people, the minds of those nations were elated against the people and the God

of Israel; so that, they boasted that the God of Israel was nothing at all, but that the God of the Ammonites was God, and prevailed. Wherefore, David is a signal example of sin, thus breaking together nearly the whole of the ten commandments; and yet, he would not have confessed these sins, had Nathan not come to him; but would still have made himself appear to be a just and holy king.

When the sin of David is thus set forth, it furnishes a signal example both of sin and of grace. And indeed, had not the holy scriptures handed down to us this history, who would ever have believed, that so great a saint could have so foully fallen!—He had instituted the worship of the tabernacle with the utmost diligence, under the directions of the Holy Spirit—he had augmented that worship with the most holy psalms—he had conducted the most serious wars with signal success—God had pronounced him to be an elect man—he had received a most glorious promise of the future seed, that is, of Christ, whom the prophets call the son of David, and also, king David:—in short, there can be no reason why he should not be justly compared with Moses and Samuel: and yet, so great a man, falls, not into one light sin, but into many enormities of sins at once: and what is still more perilous, he falls into impenitence, and deep security: so that, had not Nathan come to him, David might, perhaps, have sinned against the Holy Ghost.

Since, therefore, so great a man, who was full of the Holy Spirit, renowned for the greatest works, for divine wisdom, for a gift of prophecy distinguished above all others, so foully fell, it may be as an example before us, that we may derive consolation whenever we are overcome and fall into sin, or when our consciences are touched with a sense of the wrath and the judgment of God. For here, in this most manifest example, the goodness and mercy of God shine forth,

as ready to pardon our sins and to justify us,—if we do not add the cloak, of denying that we have sinned, as it is shewn in the history of Saul; who, although he had sinned against the voice of the Lord, might have been pardoned, if he had not added to his sin a defence of it, saying, “*I have* obeyed the voice of the Lord,” 1 Sam. xv.: and even when he was admonished the second time, he perseveringly denied the charge: nay, “I have (says he) heard the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me.” Therefore, he received from Samuel this dreadful sentence, “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.” As though he had said,—The Lord is, indeed, ready to forgive sins; but it is to those who acknowledge their sins, and who do not despair but believe that there is a way of return open unto that God who has promised the remission of sins unto those that repent, &c.

Therefore, although the Psalm speaks of the whole nature of sin, and the fountain-spring of it, yet we do not exclude the history to which the title of it refers—adultery and the murder of Uriah. For in these sins of his, David saw, as in a glass, the pollution of his whole nature: so that, he thought thus with himself—Behold here am I, who have administered the affairs of the state, who have instituted the church and the worship of God, and who have guided the people by the skilfulness of my hands, Ps. lxxviii. ! and how am I fallen into such iniquity, into so many and great sins? From the knowledge of one sin, therefore, he came to the knowledge of the whole of his sinfulness. As though he had said—If I, so great a man, have thus fallen as it were from heaven down to hell, is not this a full proof to me and to all men, that in my flesh there is no good whatever?

It is therefore great wisdom to know, that we are nothing but sin; that we might not think lightly of

sin as the Pope's teachers do, who define sin to be, 'a word, or an act, or thought against the law of God.' Whereas, do you define it according to this Psalm, 'that the whole of that which is born of father and mother is sin, even before the person can, by reason of age, do, say, or think any thing.' For, from this root, nothing can be born that is good before God. And hence arises the division of sin. First, the whole nature is corrupt by sin, and subjected to eternal death. And next, the external appearance as it were of sin which a man, having the law, can perceive: as when thefts, adulteries, or murders are committed. But of this latter kind, even the civil laws speak, though not with sufficient accuracy.

As to what the schoolmen say therefore, 'that things are sound by nature,' that is a great blasphemy; and the blasphemy is still greater, when it is considered, that the same saying applies also to devils. If things natural were sound, what need would there be of Christ? Moreover, if man when born, have thus a sound will and a sound understanding, to which (as they say,) the will can naturally conform itself, what is the meaning of all this—that what was in paradise lost by sin, can be restored in no other way than by the Son of God alone? And yet many teachers of theology, as it appears, in our times, defend this opinion—'that natural things are sound;' that is, that the will is good; and if at any time, through depravity, it will or think that which is not right and good, they attribute that to the depravity of men, but not to the will simply, as considered in itself. Against these perilous sentiments, therefore, the mind must be fortified, lest the knowledge of grace be obscured; for that cannot possibly remain sound and whole, while we think in this way of the nature of man.

Nor is this doctrine of the schoolmen to be by any means borne with in the church—'that man can

do the law as to the *substance of the act*, but not as to the *intention of the law-giver*: seeing that, according to the intention of the law-giver, not the work only is required, but that disposition of the heart which is called grace.' This is as if I should say—that he who is able in both hands and feet can rightly perform his duty, but is hindered from so doing, because he is not at the same time clad in a black or white gown. According to this therefore they plainly say, that God requires something beyond the ten commandments; and is not contented with a man's fulfilling those ten commandments, but requires moreover a disposition of heart. But all these enormities have arisen from this—their not rightly knowing what sin is. And I have for this end mentioned these things, that we may see how wide a difference there is between our sound doctrine and that enormous and lying doctrine of the Pope.

What we say is—that things by nature are utterly corrupt. For Adam, when he was created, had a right will and understanding. He heard rightly, he saw rightly, and rightly managed all earthly things in faith and to the praise of God. But since the fall, the will, the understanding, and all the natural faculties are corrupt; so that, man is no longer upright, but warped by sin; he has lost his right judgment in the sight of God, and does every thing perversely and contrary to the will and law of God; he no longer knows God and loves him, but flees from him and dreads him, and saith in his heart that he is not God, that is, merciful and good, but a judge and a tyrant.

From this loss of the knowledge of God, arise other sins in numbers infinite; for men in their prosperity sin with all security; as do our adversaries, who persecute the Word of God from a confidence in their own power, and then imagine that God is of such a nature, that they can, by their diligence and devotion, gain him over and reconcile him to them-

selves. Hence arose monasteries, orders, hoods and strings, masses, pilgrimages, and other absurd kinds of worship, which nature, destitute of the knowledge of God, formed out to itself without, and contrary to, the Word. And are not these evidences sufficiently manifest, that things by nature (as far God and the worship of God are concerned) are most corrupt? Evidences of this are afforded also in the Old Testament by the various idol worship, by the contempt of the prophets and of the Word of God, and by many sins of the same kind, which God by the prophets condemns in the ungrateful people.

Nor can we even in civil things declare ‘that natural things are sound.’ For we see how great a contempt there is of those laws which enjoin that which is right; and what a subversion there is of that discipline, to maintain which, laws and magistrates were ordained of God. We see also, that the physician is often deceived in preparing his medicines; and through ignorance, he sometimes kills his patient. Nay, the very sight of our eyes, our ears, and all our other organs, have contracted corruption from sin, and are not sound and whole as they were in Adam before the fall. This corruption of the faculties is manifest even in natural things—what do you suppose then they can do in things spiritual?

We are, therefore, by sin utterly averse from God, so that we cannot have one right thought concerning God, but think of him just as we do of an idol. Cicero and other great men in the republic discharged their duties nobly, if you look at the duties themselves; but if you look at their minds, you will see that they were excited thereto from no other motive than the love of their own glory: as this celebrated maxim plainly shews, ‘Fire thy mind with glory only.’ And is not this a manifest evidence of the loss of the knowledge of God, whom we ought to serve from duty only, and not with a view to our own glory? But now the di-

rectly opposite is the case—we seek not the glory of God, but our own glory, in all the things of God and in all his creatures. And thus those very persons who were renowned for their temperance and sobriety, had, as the principal object of their desires, their own glory, not the will of God.

Therefore, the nature of our sin is this—we are born and conceived in sin: and this is what David testifies from his own experience. Hence, he defines sin to be a corruption of all the faculties external and internal; so that, no one member can perform its office now, as it did in paradise before sin entered; and that we have all departed from God, are filled with an evil conscience, and are subject to disease and death, according to the words of the denounced punishment—“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

It is in this knowledge of the sin of the whole nature, that this Psalm instructs us. It does not only afford us an *example*, (though we thank the schoolmen for telling us that this is also afforded,) but it embraces the whole doctrine of spiritual religion—the knowledge of God, and also the knowledge of our nature, of sin, and of grace, &c. Wherefore, we are to consider this Psalm as containing an universal doctrine, applicable to the whole people of God from the beginning down to the present day: in which doctrine David, or rather, the Holy Ghost in David, instructs us in the knowledge of God and of ourselves: and he does each most gloriously, for he shews most plainly what sin is first, and then, what the knowledge of grace is, without which, despair must follow.

Moreover, this knowledge of sin is not a mere speculative knowledge, or an imagination which the mind may paint out to itself; but is a true sensation, a real experience, and a most heavy conflict of heart: as he himself testifies where he saith, “For I acknowledge my iniquity:” that is, I feel it, I experience it;

for that is what the Hebrew word signifies. It does not signify, as the Pope teaches, 'calling to your recollection what you have done or what you have omitted,' but feeling the intolerable burthen of the wrath of God. The knowledge of sin, is the very feeling of sin; and a sinner, is one who is distressed in his conscience, and stands anxiously alarmed, not knowing which way to turn himself.

We are not, therefore, here speaking of the philosophical knowledge of man, which defines man to be a rational animal, &c. These things are physical, not theological. It is in this way, that the lawyer speaks of man, as the possessor and lord of his property. It is in this way, that the physician speaks of man as sick and in health. But the theologian speaks of man as a sinner. This is the nature of man in theology, and the theologian treats of this nature as corrupted by sin, to the end that man might feel it. And when that takes place, desperation follows, which thrusts the man down to hell. For what can that man do in the sight of a just God, who feels that his whole nature is overwhelmed with sin, and no power left him whereby he can make himself better, but is reduced to a state utterly destitute of all righteousness?

When these things are thus truly felt in the mind, then ought to follow that other part of knowledge, which must also, not be speculative, but wholly experimental and sensibly felt—the man must hear and learn what grace is, what justification is, and what the will of God is concerning a man thus cast down to hell,—to raise him up and restore him through Jesus Christ. Here the mind that was cast down, is again raised up: for according to this doctrine of grace, he with joy concludes thus—if I be a sinner in myself, I am not a sinner in Christ, who was made righteousness for such as me; but I am righteous and justified by righteous and justifying Christ, who is therefore

called the “justifier,” because he is so to sinners, and was sent for sinners.

These are the two parts of theological knowledge, of which David treats in this Psalm. So that the subject-matter of the Psalm, is the theological knowledge of man, and the theological knowledge of God; that no one might think of Majesty only, that is, what God can do and how powerful he is; and that no one might think of man as the lord of his possessions, as the lawyer does; nor of man sick or in health, as the physician does; but of man as a sinner. For the proper subject of theology, is man as guilty on account of sin and lost, and God the Justifier and Saviour of man as a sinner. Whatever is sought for, or disputed on, beyond or out of this subject-matter in theology, is error and poison. For it is to this, that the whole scripture tends—to commend the goodness of God towards us, who wills by his Son, to restore nature fallen into sin and damnation, to righteousness and life.

Here, nothing is treated of concerning this corporeal life, what food we are to use, what employment we are to undertake, how our families are to be managed, how our land is to be tilled, &c. These things were all settled before, when man was in paradise, and were given into the hands of men, when God said, “Rule ye over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air.” But here the subject is concerning a future and eternal life, concerning God the Justifier, the Restorer, the Reviver, and concerning man, fallen from righteousness and life, into sin and eternal death. He who keeps this in view in reading the Holy Scriptures, will read these sacred things with profit.

This theological knowledge therefore, is necessary that a man might know himself; that is, that he might know, feel, and experience, that he is guilty of sin and subject to death. And then, that he might know also and experience the contrary,—that God is the Justifier and Redeemer of the man who thus knows himself. As to all the rest of men who do not know their sins, let us leave them to lawyers, to physicians, and to parents: for these

treat of man in a different way from a theologian.—I now come to the Psalm.

VERSE 1.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions..

Here, first of all, an observation must be made upon David's addressing God, and making no mention of Christ; lest you should imagine, that David addresses God as a Mahometan, or any other of the Gentiles, would do.—David is here addressing the God of his fathers as a promising God. For the people of Israel did not view God as an absolute God, (so to speak,) in the same way as the ignorant herd of Monks ascend into heaven in their speculative imaginations, and view God as absolute. From this absolute God all ought to flee who would not perish; because, human nature, and an absolute God, (I make use of this commonly used term for the sake of instruction,) are the most hostilely opposed to each other; and it cannot be, but that human infirmity must be overwhelmed with such awful Majesty; as the scripture continually teaches.

Wherefore, let no one here understand David as addressing an absolute God.—He addressess God as clothed and revealed in his Word and promises, that Christ might not be excluded from the name God, concerning whom God made the promise unto Adam and the other patriarchs. It is this God, not as naked, but as clothed and revealed in his Word, that we must apprehend, or certain despair will fall upon us.

And this distinction must ever be made between the prophets, and the Gentiles, addressing God. The Gentiles address God out of the Word and promises, according to the imagination of their own hearts. But the prophets address God as clothed and revealed in his Word and promises. This God, under so merciful a form, and (so to speak) wearing so sweet a mask, that is, his pro-

mises, can be apprehended and looked upon by us with joy and confidence. Whereas, on the other hand, an absolute God is as a brazen wall, upon which we cannot run without our destruction. And therefore, that which Satan aims at day and night, is, to put us upon going to meet a naked God; so that, forgetting the promises, and good-will of God revealed in Christ, we might think only of God and the judgments of God. And whenever that is the case, we are undone directly, falling into despair.

Hence it is, that David does not address an absolute God, but he addresses the God of his fathers; that is, the God of whose promises he had a knowledge, and whose mercy and grace he sensibly felt.—When therefore any Turk, hypocrite, or Monk says, “Have mercy upon me, O God,” it is as if he said nothing at all; because, he does not apprehend God on whom he calls, in that view and under that form which is brought down to our conceptions, but he apprehends and runs upon God in his absolute power; whence follow, of necessity, despair and a fall from heaven down to hell like that of Lucifer. This, therefore, is the reason why the prophets so leaned upon the promises of God in their prayers; because, the promises include Christ, and render God not our judge, or our enemy, but a kind and favouring God; whose will is, to restore the condemned unto life, and to save them.

I thought it right to make this observation first of all, on account of many other passages in the prophets. And now, this is also to be considered, how that agrees where he saith, “Have mercy upon me, O God.”—Here, if you consider the persons between whom this intercourse is going on, God, and the sinner David, there will appear to be the greatest dissimilitude and an unalterable contradiction. And is not this the sensible impression on the mind of all nature, and the judgment of all men—that God hates sin? As the blind man saith, John ix., “We know that God heareth not sinners, but he heareth them that fear him and do his will.” It is written also in the Ten Commandments, “I am a jealous God.” Nay, throughout nearly the whole

of Moses, there is nothing but naked threatenings against the evil and disobedient.

And the sensible impression upon the mind of all nature, accords with the law of Moses; which impression, we cannot by any means shake off. For all men judge thus—Thou art a sinner, and God is just; therefore, he hates thee, therefore he will punish thee, therefore he will not hear thee.—These conclusions it is impossible but that all nature must draw. Hence, nearly all the holy fathers who have written on the Psalms, have expounded a just God, as signifying, *a God who justly takes vengeance and punishes*; and not as signifying, *a God who justifies*. Wherefore, it happened to me when I was young, that I hated this appellation of God; and from this custom or habit, I even to this day shudder, as it were, when I hear God called *just*.—So great is the force of false doctrine when minds imbibe it in early years: and yet nearly all the old teachers so expound it.

But if God be *thus* just, that he punishes justly, or according to desert, who can stand in the sight of a God just in this sense? For we are all sinners, and bring with us before God a just cause for inflicting punishments upon us! Be such justice, therefore, and such a just God, far removed from us, for, as a consuming fire, he will devour us all. Because, since God has sent Christ as a Saviour, his will is, most truly, not to be just *in punishing according to desert*, but he wills to be, and to be called, just, as *justifying those who acknowledge their sins*, and to have mercy upon them.

David's saying, therefore, as a sinner, "Have mercy upon me, O God," seems as if he spoke contrary to the Ten Commandments, in which God commands men not to be sinners, and threatens those who are sinners with punishment. For what harmony can there be between a sinner, and a God who is just, true, and an enemy and foe to sinners, and who, from his nature cannot bear with sin? And yet David, who afterwards saith, "I acknowledge my transgressions;" and also, "My sin is ever before me;" this same David, I say,

calls upon God and saith, "Have mercy upon me, O God."—This is, in truth, (as they say,) to harmonize incompatible contradictions.

Wherefore, at the very beginning, David displays that skilfulness and wisdom, which is above the wisdom of the Ten Commandments, and is truly a heavenly wisdom, which the law cannot teach, and of which, reason, without the Holy Spirit, can have neither knowledge nor idea. For nature, universally, comes to this conclusion, and says within herself—I dare not lift up my eyes to heaven, but am frightened at the sight of God: for I know both that I am a sinner, and that God hates sin:—shall I therefore pray? And here begins a most difficult conflict. For the mind, being distracted in itself from a consciousness of sin, either resolves to put off prayer until it shall find in itself some worthiness; or else, it looks after some natural inventions and consolations of human wisdom, which set it to thinking about first making satisfaction, in order that it might, with some confidence in its own worthiness, approach God and say, "Have mercy upon me, O God." This is the way in which our own nature always proceeds, but it is of all ways the most pernicious. Because, our minds are thereby lifted up with a confidence in our own righteousness, and have a persuasion that God can be appeased by our works. This is a blasphemous presumption in our own merits, in opposition to the merits of Christ. Moreover, as we are born in sin, it follows, that if we never attempt to pray, till we feel that we are clean from all sin, we shall never pray at all!

Wherefore, this blasphemous way of thinking must be shaken off; and in the very midst of sin, or, to speak more descriptively, in the very sea of sins, this means must be used which David here uses. Prayer must not be put off! For what meaning or purport has the word *mercy*, if those who pray are clean, and have no need of mercy? But, as I said, this is the terrible conflict—so to encourage our mind, when under the very sense of sin, as to be enabled to cry unto God, "Have mercy upon me." I who now teach these things, and give this in-

struction to others, have often learnt, by my own experience, that of all works, to pray thus is the most difficult. And therefore, I do not profess to be a proficient in this exercise. This however I confess, that I have often, when in the greatest dangers, pronounced these words, "Have mercy upon me, O God," very coldly; because, I was offended with my own unworthiness; and yet, the Holy Spirit prevailed, who suggested to me—in what state soever thou art, thou must certainly pray. For God does not wish to be prayed to and to hear prayers, according to thy worthiness, but according to his own mercy.

That these things, therefore, may be rightly understood—that God hates sinners and loves the righteous, a distinction must be made between the man who is sensible of his sins and the man who is not sensible of his sins. God does not wish to hear the prayer of the sinner who is not sensible of his sins, because such an one does not understand what he is praying for, and does not wish to understand. Thus the Monk who lives in his superstition, repeatedly chants and mutters out "Have mercy upon me, O God;" but because he lives in a confidence in his own righteousness, and does not feel the uncleanness of his heart, he only utters syllables without understanding the reality of the matter, or wishing to understand it. Moreover, he adds to this a conduct the contrary of his prayers. He asks for pardon; he asks for mercy; whereas, he is all the while seeking, by this means and that, to make atonement and satisfaction for sin himself. And is not this mocking God to his face? It is just as if any noisy beggar should cry with urgent entreaties for alms, and when any one gave them, should immediately shew his own possessions; that is, should boast of his lying imposture, and give a plain proof that he did not want alms.

Thus the enemies of the Gospel repeat numberless words, and at the same time not only do not understand the reality of the matter, but act directly the contrary, while they assume various forms of worship, and while they seek the remission of sins by impious masses, by

pilgrimages, and invocations of saints, &c. Such sinners, who are sinners indeed, and yet do not feel that they are sinners, but who rush forward with hardened brows, justify themselves, and persecute the Word of God, &c. ; such sinners, I say, are to be driven far away from all mercy ; before such, the words of wrath are to be set in array ; by which, God does not offer mercy, but threatens eternal punishment ; according to this sentence of the first commandment, “ I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation.”

Moreover, the examples of wrath are to be set before these ; the destruction of Sodom, the out-pouring of the flood upon all flesh, the carrying away captive of the holy people, and whatever other monuments of the judgment and wrath of God are revealed in the scriptures ; that these insensible and impenitent sinners may be brought down to a knowledge of themselves, and may begin in earnest to implore mercy. For these are they, concerning whom it is said, ‘ God hateth sinners,’ “ God heareth not sinners,” &c.

There are other sinners, who are sensible of their sins and of the wrath of God, and are frightened away from the face of God. These, on the contrary, take unto themselves all the threatenings which are denounced in the word of God, and are so cast down in their minds from the horrible examples of the divine wrath, that they fear the same punishments themselves on account of their sins. But when, under these terrors, the mind is thus as it were bruised with the hammer of the law and of the judgments of God, then is the season, then is the time and the occasion for laying hold of this divine wisdom ; that the heart may lift itself up, and assure itself for a certainty, that God, when he is wrath with sinners, is wrath with those only who are hardened and insensible ; but that it is said to those who feel the burthen of their sins, “ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him.” For then the law has done enough, and those thunderings of an angry God ought to cease, and those lights of mercy ought to shine which are set forth in the Word : →

that "God taketh pleasure in them that fear him;" that God despiseth not a broken and contrite heart; that his ears are open to, and his eyes fixed upon, the poor, to raise him from the dunghil; and that he will fan into a flame the smoking flax, and will bind up the bruised reed, &c. For these characters are that 'poor tender worm' (as the translation of Jerom renders it, 2 Kings xxiii., though it is not in the Hebrew) and that 'most delicate flower,' which is shaken by, and made to tremble at, the least breath of the Divine threatenings. Whereas the others, those insensible sinners, in the midst of the greatest storms, stand like mountains of iron, unmoved by all the preaching of repentance.

Wherefore, in these alarms of conscience, this one thing must be regarded—that minds thus terrified judge not according to their own natural feelings, for they will thus be hurried away into despair. But as there are different remedies, according to the different nature of diseases; so, those who are thus terrified, are to be raised up by the words of grace; while those hardened ones are to be broken in pieces with a rod of iron.

The Pope, with his teachers, can give no sound instruction in such perils of conscience as these, as I have learnt by my own experience. For they all judge according to nature.—I am a sinner, and God is just: therefore, the same punishment awaits me, which awaits other sinners.—Here nature rests, nor can it, under those dark clouds of Divine wrath, behold the rays of mercy.

But here comes in our true theology; and teaches, that when minds are thus alarmed, then one part of theology is accomplished, which makes use of the law and threatenings, that the sinner may begin to know himself, and put off that security, in which, before this revelation of the Divine wrath, we all live naturally; and that, he ought not to stop here, but to go on to know the other part of theology, wherein the whole knowledge of theology is completed—that God giveth grace to the humble; that those threatenings and terrible examples of wrath apply only to hardened and secure sinners; that God is to them a "jealous God" and "a consuming

fire;" but that those contrite and trembling ones are the people of grace, whose wounds it is the will of "the good shepherd who layeth down his life for the sheep," to bind up and heal. Such, therefore, ought not to follow those cogitations of their own hearts, which persuade them; that, on account of their sins, they ought not to pray and to hope for grace; but let them, like David, cry out with a trusting heart, "Have mercy upon me, O God;" because, in such as they are, God "taketh pleasure."

This part of the theology contained in this Psalm is unknown to the schools of the Papists. For, behold David breaking out into these words with a freely open mouth, "Have mercy upon me, O God;" and thus, uniting things in their nature the most contrary to each other—God and a sinner, the unjust and the just. He rises above that mighty mountain of Divine wrath which separates God and David, with a confident trust in mercy, and unites himself to God. And this is the experience which our theology teaches, in addition to that of the law. For, to call upon God and say, "Have mercy," is no great labour; but to add the particle *ME*, this is that which is inculcated by the whole preaching of the Gospel, and yet, we find by our own experience, how difficult it is to be performed by us. For this word *ME*, is a hinderance to nearly all our prayers; when it ought, on the contrary, to be the great and only cause and reason why we should pray.

Wherefore, we must, first of all, consider the example here given, that we may rightly comprehend the pronoun *ME*, and may be persuaded that it signifies the sinner; as David afterward clearly explains it, when he says, "I was conceived in sin;" for he there confesses, that this *ME* signifies the greatest of sinners. Wherefore, let us also learn this—that that multitude of thoughts which would keep us back, should drive us to cry the more: as we read of the blind man in the Gospel, who, the more he was rebuked, cried out so much the more. For we feel this multitude as it were of cogitations within us, to rebuke us.—Why dost thou think of pray-

ing? Dost thou not know what thou art, and what God is?—This multitude of thoughts is very damping to the spirit, and hinders many; but it is to be despised; and we are, on that very account which seems to be a reason why we should not pray, to pray the more; that we may, by a certain force, press through that multitude unto Christ and cry for mercy.

Those who do this pray aright. But truly a great struggle of spirit is required. For I have found in my own experience, that prayer, under these cogitations, was often beaten away from me. Yet, by the grace of God, I came to this thought—not to yield to Satan thus attacking me, but, plucking up a force of spirit, to turn the weapons of my enemy against himself; and say, Thou therefore frightenest me away from prayer, because I am a sinner; but I see, that for this very reason, because I am so great a sinner and have need of mercy, I must pray the more.

The same course must be taken in the very heat of temptations, when minds are tempted with thoughts of lust and revenge. In this case, if any one exhort to prayer, the mind immediately objects its impurity: as though there were, under these filthy scenes of thought, no place for prayer. Here, on the contrary, urge, that no end of this temptation is to be waited for; that is, until these thoughts of lust, or of any other sin, shall have left the mind; but do thou at that very moment when thou feelest the temptation to be the strongest, and thou art the least prepared for prayer, go into a place by thyself and pray the Lord's Prayer, or utter whatever thou canst say against Satan and his temptation: thou wilt then find, that the temptation will abate and Satan will walk off.

But if any one begin to think, that prayer should be put off until the mind become pure from unclean thoughts; such an one does nothing but assist Satan with all his wisdom and strength, who is already more than a match for him. This is, indeed, the religion of the Gentiles and of sophists; nay, it is the doctrine of Satan. Against which practice, the doctrine of this Psalm is to

be maintained; in which we see that David, under the very sight of all his impurity, and under a particular sin of the flesh, did not flee from God and say, as Peter foolishly said in the ship, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" but, with a reliance on mercy, he breaks out into prayer and says, Lord, if I am a sinner, as indeed I am, have mercy upon me,—For we ought, when our hearts truly feel sin, to go the more on that account unto God in prayer. We should have fled away, we should have dreaded God before, when there was a danger of falling into sin: but after a fall, we should hope for pardon and ask for it, and not stand still in thoughts of wrath and dread. Whereas, at these times, the aim of Satan is to pervert this order of things—that, in the commission of sins we should be secure and without the fear of God, and after they are committed, remain in dread without the hope of, or reliance on, mercy.

But, as I said, look at David wisely fleeing unto mercy and saying, "Have mercy upon me, O God." As though he had said, I know that I am a bad man and a sinner, and that thou art just. Therefore, my taking courage and daring to pray, is all done in a reliance upon thy Word and promises: because I know that thou art not the God of proud hypocrites, nor of those who boast in their righteousness, wisdom, and strength, &c.; but the God of our fathers, who hast promised that thou wilt redeem sinners; not however mere sinners, but sensible sinners, who know and feel that they are sinners, and therefore it is that I dare to say "Have mercy upon me, O God:" for I am a sinner, tempted by the flesh, by murder, by anger, and by hatred: but my hope is in thy mercy and goodness, which thou hast promised unto those that thirst after righteousness, &c.

These things, however, cannot be fully described as they really are, but must be learnt by our own experience: that will teach us, how great a conflict it is to overcome this mountain as it were of our own unworthiness and sins, which stands between us and God. But although the weakness of our faith is here so greatly

felt, yet, this consolation also should be held fast by us—that it is not we only who say, “Have mercy upon me, O God,” but that the spirit says and prays the same in our hearts with “groanings that cannot be uttered.” And although we can neither see these groans nor fully understand them, yet God, who also is a spirit, sees them most clearly and understands them most fully. Relying therefore on this Intercessor, we ought to resist Satan in the midst of our conflicts and temptations, and say,—If I am a sinner what then! God is merciful! If I am not a fit object for prayer on account of sin, it is well: I would not become more fit: for, to my grief, I am too fit an object for prayer already, because I am so great a sinner.

This is the doctrine contained in this part—that sensible sinners (so to term them for the sake of instruction) should take courage; that, as a just God, and man the sinner, are to be reconciled, we should not so fear in the midst of sins as to be hindered from crying out “Have mercy upon me!” and that the pronoun ME, or the name LORD, should not prevent us from putting in between them the word MERCY, through which, God, and man the sinner, are to be reconciled. If this be not done, we shall never be able to sing this Psalm aright, nor even to pray the Lord’s Prayer aright. Because, it will never be in this life, that we shall be free at any time from all sins together. For although there may be no actual sins, (as they are termed,) which is very rarely the case, yet, there will always be original sin. And as we are always in sin, therefore, we ought always to be in prayer; thus, in truth, the hearts of Christians are in prayer every moment; for they see every moment their unworthiness, and desire God to pardon it. These perpetual breathings of the Christian heart, are disturbed and hidden by various cogitations, and sometimes also, by business, so that we cannot always see them. And here, spiritual strength is, to overcome sin in this way by prayer, and when we feel our infirmity, to flee to this cry, “Have mercy upon me, O God.”

And now we have shewn how a just God, and man

ne sinner, are to be reconciled, this instruction is also to be given—how we are to understand the words “have mercy.” For if we consider this carefully, we must of necessity conclude, that our whole life consists in, and is placed in the bosom of, the mercy of God. For since we are all *MES*, that is, sinners, it manifestly follows, as a necessary consequence, that whatever we are in ourselves or in life is all of mere grace, and not because of any righteousness or merit of our own. What! thou wilt say, are not then the Ten Commandments to be kept? And if they be kept, is not that righteousness? I answer—we would have the Ten Commandments to be kept and observed, but, it must be according to the extensive, that is, the evangelical dispensation or distinction. Because, we have received the “first-fruits of the Spirit” only, and the groans of the Spirit still remain in our hearts. Moreover, our flesh, with its lusts and motions of concupiscence, that is, the whole tree together with its fruits, still remains. On this account it is, that the law can never be completely fulfilled. Were it otherwise, and the whole law could be fulfilled, what need would there be for that righteousness which David seeks by the Word “Have mercy?” that is, what need would there be of *imputation*? But now, when even in the saints the remnants of sin still remain, not being yet wholly mortified, it is so, that we experience both these things:—we both resist sin and obey the law by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and yet, when impelled into sin by the flesh and by Satan, we hope for the remission of sins.

Thus, the obedience under the law was sacrificing; and yet, the prophet saith in the latter part of this Psalm, ‘sacrifice and burnt-offering thou didst not desire.’ For though the sacrifices were thus, yet mercy was not left out. In the same manner, we fulfil the law by the Holy Spirit; and yet, the word “Have mercy” still remains; that is, we still remain sinners, and need the free remission of sins by the merits of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the whole of our life even unto death, is mercy; and yet, Christians yield an obedience to the law; but an imperfect one on account of sin dwelling in

us. Wherefore, let us learn this also—that we are to consider the word Mercy, as extending, not to our actual sins only, but to all the blessings of God; because, we are justified by the merits of another; because, we have God for our Father; because, God the Father loves sensible sinners: in a word, because, our whole life is mercy, for our whole life is sin, and yet is not exposed to the judgment or wrath of God.

Hence, David does not only say, “Have mercy upon me, O God,” but adds, “according to thy great loving-kindness;” and thus, says nothing whatever about merit, or righteousness of works. He does not say, like him in the Gospel,—I fast twice on a sabbath. He does not say, Have mercy upon me according to the merit of worthiness (*meritum condignum*), or ‘the merit of congruity’ (*meritum congruum*), for what have these to do with mercy? To boast of merit and such things, belongs to hypocrites, and not to David: as it is recorded concerning the brother of a certain king, who, in the last moment of his life said unto God, ‘Give me what thou hast promised, as I have rendered unto thee what thou hast commanded.’ I would not have these to be my words in the article of death! for the contrary must be said, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord,” Psalm xliii. ! Again, “Blot out my iniquities,” Psalm li. ! And what merit can we boast of, with a reliance upon this trifling advantage, as it were,—that God’s eye is just? David says nothing at all about his own righteousness and merit, and wishes to act according to the “great loving-kindness” of God. In this way he keeps himself clear, not only from his own righteousness, but also from the wrath of God. He sets no other object before his eyes than a merciful, pleased, and smiling God. For he has it fixed in his own mind, that God is of great mercy; and that, therefore, he wills and thinks of nothing else but to pardon and to bless.

This view of God as favouring and having mercy is a reviving view, under which the Psalmist covers the pronoun ME and throws aside wrath into a corner, and says God favours me! This is not the theology of reason,

which, under sin, advises despair: for David has a feeling sense of sin and the wrath of God, and yet says, "Have mercy upon me, O God." This doctrine reason knows not, but the Holy Scriptures reveal it, as you see in the first verse of this Psalm: for each word is placed clearly and purely. But they are the words of the Spirit containing life; and by which, those who are spiritual, distinguish between sinner and sinner, and between God and God; and learn even to reconcile the wrath of God, or an angry God, with man a sinner.

But thou wilt say—These things will not so come to pass in reality, because I, being thus taught by thy words, learn to think thus in my mind.—Nay, it is certain, that as thou believest, so it shall be done unto thee. For this faith is not derived from thine own thinking, but drawn from the Word of God. If therefore thou canst apprehend, and be persuaded for certain of this, that God "taketh pleasure in them that fear him;" then so will it in reality be unto thee: if thou canst not apprehend it, then thou art not under that "pleasure," but under wrath; according to that saying of Christ, "As thou believest so be it done unto thee." But the thoughts concerning the wrath of God are in themselves false, because God promiseth mercy: and yet, those false thoughts become true, because thou persuadest thyself that they are true. On the contrary, those other thoughts, that God favours sinners who feel their sins, are in reality true, and remain true. Therefore, it is not so, because thou thinkest it so; nor will it therefore come to pass, because thou believest it will so come to pass. But understand it thus—that, what is certain and true in itself, becomes more certain and true to thee, by thy thus believing it to be so. Thus, if thou believe that God is wrath with thee, thou wilt surely find him wrath with thee, and an enemy: but this is by a devilish, idolatrous, and perverted persuasion: because, God is served, if thou fear him and apprehend Christ the object of mercy.

This is the true theology concerning the true God, and the true worship of God. It is a false theology, that God is wrath with those who acknowledge their sins.

Such a God is neither in heaven nor anywhere else, but is an idol of a perverted heart; because the true God saith, "I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live;" and this is exemplified in the present example and prayer of David. And we observed at the beginning, that it is only the example of David that is to be here considered; but that the Psalm is to be used as a general doctrine applying unto all men, without exception. In the same way as the Epistle of Paul to the Romans delivers this as a general sentiment, "All men are liars," Rom. iii.: and again, "God hath concluded all under sin that he might have mercy upon all," Rom. xi. In the same manner we have observed concerning David, that he does not speak of his own sin only, but of the death and life of the whole human race. Therefore God is the same toward all men as he was toward David; that is, pardoning sins, and having mercy upon all who beg for mercy and acknowledge their sin.

Hence it is, that he wishes to use this repetition, or amplification rather, and adds, "according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." He before begged, that God would turn away his eyes from his sins: and now, he does the same, but with greater fervency of spirit: for he apprehends God as promising, and with all his heart looks and turns towards his mercy, which he could not do without being helped by the Holy Spirit: without this, he could not apprehend God as promising, and know that there was with God the hope of the remission of sins for sinners. So he saith also in another Psalm, "There is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared." He does not seek after making satisfaction, he seeks no secluded corner where he may prepare himself unto grace, but goes straight into the sight of God, and to his mercy; which is known to him, not from his own heart, nor from the dictation of reason, (for reason under sin flees from God, because it cannot bear the convictions of conscience in that light, so as to believe, that there is mercy, grace, and favour with God for sinners,) but this mercy is known to him

from the promises, which he beholds scattered everywhere, even throughout the law and decalogue: for although God there threatens sinners, yet he retains the name of the merciful God: the same is testified in the promises to Adam, Abraham, &c.

This same way must we also take in all our temptations; that as often as we are bidden and troubled in our consciences on account of sin, we might turn away our thoughts from sin and roll ourselves into the bosom of God, which is called grace and mercy; nothing doubting, but that his good-will is to display that grace and mercy towards afflicted and miserable sinners, even as his will is to display wrath and judgment against hardened sinners. This is true theology; which this verse of the Psalm manifestly sets forth when it says, “according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

The term *RAF* is used when a great number or quantity of distinct things is signified; as we say also in German, *GROS GELT*, a great sum of counted money. And then, the term *HESED* is well known. Paul often renders it “benefit;” as in 1 Tim. vi., where, speaking of servants, he saith, that they ought to honour their masters; and he adds this as the reason, because they are “partakers of the benefit” of the Gospel. Sometimes also he renders it “love.” The Greek interpreter renders it “mercy;” as in that passage of Hosea, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice;” that is, that ye love one another, and do good one to another. So also he renders it in this passage, “have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great loving-kindness.”

The other term *RAHEM*, signifies, to put on a disposition of clemency; to desire not to regard the sin of another, but to pardon it, to pass it by, &c.; as in this passage, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;” that is, I will pardon, I will forgive sin. And then follows the term *RAHEMIM*, which our interpreter renders “tender mercies.”—This is the signification of the Hebrew text, which I have explained for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the language.

And now, observe how excellently David unites these

two.—First, that God would have mercy ; that is, that he would freely do good to us who are utterly unworthy. And then, that he would grant unto us the remission of sins ; which we receive by faith in the promises, under the Holy Spirit. For, if God pardon not freely, there is no satisfaction, no remedy for us beside. There is no salvation by fastings, none by any other works,—none by angels, nor by any other creature ; the only salvation is a fleeing to the mercy of God, seeking from God goodwill and pardon, begging of him not to regard our sins and transgressions, but to pass them by, and to deal with us according to his “loving-kindness” and his “tender mercies.” And if God do not this, we are not of ourselves worthy that he should grant us one hour of our life, or give unto us one mouthful of bread.

But here again we find by experience, that it is a work of great skilfulness, and of the greatest difficulty, so to join these two things, and to fix the eyes only on the “loving-kindness” and “tender mercies” of God. For these words do not grow by nature in our own hearts, but are brought down to us from heaven by the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, these thorns are the things that naturally grow in our hearts—I am a sinner, God is just, and angry with me as a sinner. These thorns the conscience cannot pluck out ; it cannot bring a sinner into the presence of God as a favouring and pardoning God ; this is the gift of the Holy Spirit ; not of our own will, nor in our own power. For when the conscience is without the Holy Spirit, our hearts either become hardened in sin, or sink into despair : and each of these is contrary to the will of God.

David, therefore, under the Spirit, sails in the middle between this satanic Scylla and Charibdis, and throws himself in safety on that boundless and infinite mercy of God, and saith—‘Thy tender mercies, O Lord, are many and great, but I am a sinner who have lived badly ; who now live badly, and ever shall live badly as long as I live. If, therefore, I would come into thy presence, I must of necessity bring with me other thoughts than those which my heart suggests to me. I confess,

therefore, my sin before thee, for it is great: (as he saith also Psalm xxv.) But I so confess my sin, as to confess at the same time, that thy “loving-kindness” and thy “tender mercies” are far greater than my sin; and that thy righteousness, by which thou justifiest sinners is, to an infinite degree, too great to allow me to despair:—and therefore he saith, “according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.” And since he saith, that there are a great multitude of tender mercies, he plainly denies, and will not know any holiness, either in himself or others. For what suitable meeting could there be between a multitude of tender mercies, and human holiness! If, therefore, mercy be so great, there is no such thing as holiness in us: and it is a mere fabricated term to call a man a Saint, even as it would be a fabricated term to say, that God is fallen into sin: for this is no where in the nature of things.

These deeply-rooted and inveterate errors and false opinions, therefore, are to be rejected: such as saying, after the manner of the monks, Saint Jerome, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, &c.; for they are all in themselves sinners, and God only is holy; as the Church sings. And those whom we call saints, are sanctified only by the holiness of another, even of Christ; which is a holiness granted of free-mercy. By this holiness, the whole Church of the faithful are saints alike, and there is no difference. And thus, I am a saint as well as Peter, and the thief at the right hand of Christ as well as me. Nor does it make any difference, that Peter and Paul did greater things than you or I, for we are all alike sinners in ourselves, and have need of “loving-kindness” and “tender mercies.” And although the apostles had less of external sins; yet they often felt in their hearts presumption, often pride, often thoughts of desperation; often denials of God, and the like defects of human infirmity: and therefore, there is in man nothing holy, nothing good to be found: as saith the Psalm, “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men—and there is none that doeth good, no not one:” and if there be

none good among the children of men, where can they be else !

Therefore, let us talk no more about holiness and saints : for we know that those are saints, who, from being insensible, are made sensible sinners : who do not presume upon their own righteousness, (which has no existence); but begin to have an enlightened heart to know themselves and God—that whatever is of ourselves is evil before God, and is pardoned by the forgiveness of “tender mercies.” Into this bosom we, and all saints, must betake ourselves, or, we must of necessity be damned.—And it was for this purpose that God sent his Son, that he might reveal these “tender mercies” to the world, and make known that doctrine which the human heart and reason know not. And David here sets this doctrine before us while he confesses his sins, and yet confesses, that the mercy of God is greater.

Wherefore, let all men sing this verse with David, and acknowledge that they are sinners, but that God is just; that is, merciful. This confession is the sacrifice that is acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, and to which David invites us. For he would that this were the doctrine of the whole world ;—that, when the devil or conscience should accuse us on account of sins, we should freely confess, that we are in many and great sins, and yet not despair ; because, although our sins should be great and many, yet we are here taught, that the mercy of God is wide and great also. It was in this way that all the saints defended themselves against Satan ; so that, although they were sinners, yet by this knowledge they were justified ; according to Isaiah liii., ‘The knowledge of Christ shall justify many.’

When we have once heard these things, we think they are easy, and may be learnt immediately. But here is the labour, here is the conflict—to hold these things fast in the time of temptation. For the conflict is not about a thing of nought ; eternal death is in the matter, and we fight for the salvation of our souls. Moreover, we find in our experience, not only conscience crying

out against us, but also Satan breathing into us thoughts of death on account of those sins of which we are ourselves conscious. Therefore, for a man to say that he is a sinner, and yet not to despair, is altogether of Divine power. And to this power we attain, not by extenuating our sins as our adversaries do, but thus—by believing, that, as our sin is, in its nature, very great and very grievous, so also grace, or mercy, is immense and inexhaustible: as David here glories and cries, “according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.”

And to this also agrees the very term “blot out,” which the prophet here uses; as does Paul also, Col. ii., “Blotting out the hand-writing which was against us;” and also Peter, Acts iii., “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” For the term “blot out,” denotes, that our sins are written upon our conscience by the pen of the law. And the prophet desires, that as writing is blotted out on any paper, so the memory of his sins might be blotted out from his own heart and from the sight of God. And in this way, neither grace nor gratitude will be made void; for our sin is thus pardoned that we may never forget grace. For as Peter saith of those who forget the forgiveness of their former sins, that they heap up new sins by unbelief and ingratitude; so we see, in this day, the world to be full of the contempt of the Gospel and of all kinds of licentiousness. In such, sin is not blotted out, but more deeply inscribed.

David, therefore, in his desire embraces both:—that his sin may be blotted out, and that the Holy Spirit may be given him by which he may resist sin. And since he seeks nothing but the blotting out of sin, it is quite manifest, in which way we become righteous;—only by the imputation of righteousness: seeing that, our sins are blotted out by grace, and we are received into favour for Christ’s sake. — But compare with this the dreams of the sophists and of the school-men, and you will then see, how absurdly they taught concerning righteousness and the remission of sins.

VERSE 2.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Hitherto, he has begged for grace and the remission of sins, or for clemency:—that God would favour him and us all, and would pardon and blot out sin according to his mercy. For this is the first part, or the first step after the knowledge of sin:—to receive grace, to have God favourable, and ready to do us good: so that we may be in the bosom of the mercy of God, and may have a trust in those firm promises which are made to us concerning the grace of God. And as *we* have the promises in baptism, so *they* had them in Christ promised.—In this verse, however, where he begs that he may be cleansed from his sin, he sets before us another view of sin, distinct from that which he had taken before. For above, we have divided sin into felt sin (to speak) and unfelt sin; as we have made also two kinds of sinners, sensible and insensible sinners; or true sinners, and false saints or hypocrites, who, being hardened and secure, do not feel their sin. Here David shews, that sensible sin is also twofold, or may be considered in a twofold point of view. It is *sin pardoned by grace*, and *sin remaining in the flesh*. Sin pardoned by grace is—that God, for Christ's sake, will not leave us, how great sinners soever we may be, but will pardon us in mercy, though we be thus lost and corrupted by sin.

But it is not enough that this sin is pardoned by grace, for through infirmity we fall into sin again. We are to desire, therefore, that sin be not only pardoned but abolished entirely. 'For sin, (as Augustine says,) remains in reality, though the guilt be gone.' That is, that which is sin itself in reality, and which is pardoned, as is passed by of God, that still remains in the flesh, as is not as yet quite dead: except that, as it is said, Gen. ii The head of the serpent is bruised by Christ, though t

tongue still shews itself, and the tail still threatens to strike. For sin, because the grace and mercy of God reign over us, cannot damn us, cannot make God wrath with us. And yet the remnants of sin still remain in those who are justified; such as, concupiscence, and other evils, which the prophet beholds in himself as certain remaining dregs, or seed-beds. And therefore, as before, he had begged for an universal remission; so here, he prays for the expurgation or extirpation of these remnants.

This, therefore, is the second part of his petition, which, as I said, sets before us the other view of sin:—that God wills to blot out sins, as to the remission of guilt and the power of sin, but not as to sin itself, or the nature of sin. For the power of sin is, to accuse, to condemn, to bite, to grieve, to leave no peace to the heart, and to present an angry God, hell, &c. This power of sin is taken away by free mercy, and yet, the real remnants of this sin still remain. Therefore, both these observations are true, that no Christian has sin, and that every Christian has sin. Hence arises this different view, that in Christians, sin is twofold:—sin pardoned, and sin remaining which is to be extirpated and abolished. Sin pardoned, is that which is bruised from a believing reliance on mercy, which cannot condemn or accuse, but which, by reason of this flesh, still breaks forth and wars in our flesh, so as to produce the same fruit as aforetime, in order to make us secure, ungrateful, and ignorant of God as we were before. These are the strivings of the remnants of sin in us, which even the saints feel; but which, through the Holy Spirit, they do not indulge.

The Christian, therefore, after he is justified by faith, or has received the remission of sins, must not remain secure, as though he were rendered wholly pure from all sins, but there is still to be in him this perpetual struggling against the remnants of sin, from which the prophet here desires to be washed: though he is, indeed, already righteous and sanctified by another's, or by an external sanctification, (so to call it for the sake of in-

struction); that is, he is righteous by the mercy and grace of God.

This mercy and grace is not any thing human, it is not any disposition or quality in the heart, but is a divine benefit which is freely bestowed upon us by that right knowledge of the Gospel—the knowing, or believing, that our sin is forgiven us through the grace and merit of Christ, and hoping in the loving-kindness and many and great tender mercies of God for Christ's sake; as the prophet here saith. And is not this righteousness a righteousness not our own? seeing that, it stands in the clemency and mere gift of God shewing mercy and favouring for Christ's sake?

This is made clear by a similitude.—If any one should stand in the judgment-hall of a certain prince, meriting capital punishment, and if the prince should acquit this man by a free grant, would you not say that his crime was pardoned, not by his own merit, but by the gratuitous favour of the merciful prince? For, as to merit, he deserved nothing but the punishment of death. And yet, it is not enough for such an one that his crimes are pardoned, his chains must be loosed, garments must be given him, something must be put into his hands which he may use.—So it is with us in the matter of justification. When we are set free from guilt by mercy, we have need moreover of the gift of the Holy Spirit to purge from us the remnants of sin, or at least, so to help us, that we yield not to sin and the desires of the flesh; as Paul saith, ‘Mortifying by the Spirit the deeds of the body.’—Whereas now, the case with us is, that most of us live in that security, as though we were all spirit, and there were nothing at all of the flesh remaining. Wherefore, we are to learn that the flesh still remains, and that the office of the Spirit is to war against the flesh, that it accomplish not that which it desireth.

The Christian, therefore, is not righteous *formally*, not righteous according to *substance* or *quality*, (I use these terms for the sake of teaching,) but righteous according to a relation to something; that is, with refe-

ence to the Divine grace and free remission of sins, which belong to them who acknowledge their sin, and believe that God favours and pardons them for Christ's sake, who was delivered for our sins, and on whom we believe. After we have attained unto this righteousness by faith, then we have still need of this fountain, or washing, concerning which the Psalm here speaks. For although sin does not indeed any more condemn, yet it remains, vexes, and grievously hinders us from so fervently loving God, and from believing with so full a confidence of heart, as we in spirit wish, and as God requires; it hinders us from being chaste, meek, kind, &c.; and causes all our members, as it were, with their corrupt affections, to strive against the law of God. Here, unless we oppose and fight with all our efforts, there will be a danger lest these corrupt affections should gain strength and draw us away into our old ways of sin, as many examples of the men of our day abundantly prove; who now, after having heard the Gospel, are far worse than ever they were before. And as many examples of sects testify also, for they are in that state of security, as if their reason could not deceive them, and as if they were without flesh. Meanwhile, those diabolical cogitations which they tack on to the word of God, they approve with wonder, and spread abroad as oracles.—When this is the case, there is no place left for remedy.

As an antidote to this security, we should do well to consider the prayer of David; in which, after he had begged for the remission of sins, as to the guilt of them, and had been glad in the mercy of God, he prayed moreover for that which remained:—that he might be washed from his iniquities, that the Holy Spirit might be given unto him, and that gift and power which might dwell inwardly in the heart and purge away the remainder of sin, which began to be buried in baptism but was not yet fully buried. And this is the Christian life, as is beautifully described, Col. iii.:—that we should seek those things which are above, as those who are dead to the world, and whose life is hid in Christ: and also,

2 Cor. vii., that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The apostle here signifies, that there remained in him, and in all Christians, the same kind of filthiness of "the spirit," that is, evil imaginations concerning God; and of "the flesh," that is, corrupt affections. These, therefore, it ought to be our desire and our labour to purge from us, under the assistance of the Spirit. Whereas, those who seem to themselves to be wholly saints and without sins, are defiled in spirit; they lose faith, and form to themselves imaginations, very much like faith indeed, but which are put into their minds by the devil; by which, becoming secure, they are gradually drawn away from the Word into the ways of sin.

Therefore, you may soon say, 'I believe in Christ,' but it is a matter of the greatest labour for this faith to be surely and firmly fixed in the heart, and to remain so; because, the defilement of the spirit is ever present; neither does our own reason or Satan ever cease, who, with their united powers, are ever aiming at this;—to make us set aside the word, and govern ourselves by our own imaginations. Hence arise sects and heresies, who hate as with the most bitter hatred, and yet do not think that this their hatred is sin, but call it zeal. Therefore, they do not purge away, they do not wash off this sin, but increase it daily. Let us, however, be careful to be washed every day, that we may daily become more and more pure, and that the new man may come forth and the old man be destroyed, not only unto death, but even unto sanctification.

And this conflict-stage, as it were, of Christians, is in no small degree formed by God's permitting the Church to be oppressed with various corporal calamities, and by his suffering heresies and sects to be raised, that it might be exercised in holding fast the Word and faith, and in purging out those remnants of sin. For the Holy Spirit is therefore given to those who believe, that he might war against those imaginary visions of our own wisdom which arise in our own hearts, and which lift themselves up against the righteousness of God; and

moreover, that he might prompt us to prayer, to perform offices of humanity to all, and more especially, to the brethren ; and that thus, the mind and the body might be exercised, and that we may day by day become more and more sanctified.

The truth of this confession, therefore, is manifest,—that we are all sinners. For where washing is required, there defilement and filth are implied. But our sophists, who understand nothing but philosophical righteousness, or a quality in the mind, cannot reconcile this contrariety. They place a righteousness or quality in the heart, and where that is, they consider that the whole man is sanctified both in spirit and in flesh. When, therefore, they hear that Paul was one of the elect, and yet, that he was a sinner by reason of the remnants of sin which still remained in his nature, they think they hear of some fabled wonder that never had existence in all nature. And they consequently condemn us as heretics, and threaten us with fiery destruction.

But let them give us an answer to this eminent Psalm which is so well known:—what the reason is, that David, after “loving-kindness” and “tender mercies,” that is, after justification, prays also to be cleansed? For David, having the remission of sins, and standing in grace, being in a state in which no sin could accuse him or condemn him, is still unclean, and has yet unclean sin; which is sin indeed and in reality; excepting that, it cannot condemn him.—Therefore, David being righteous and justified, has still sin, and is yet in part unrighteous: and, in consequence, prays for that greatest of gifts, the Holy Spirit, which might purge out those remaining dregs of filth. And that gift sufficiently proves, that this washing away of sin, is no more jest or idle game. Indeed, this is especially to be guarded against, that we extenuate not these remaining dregs of sin; for if you extenuate them, you thereby also set at nought the purifier, and the gift for purification; that is, the Holy Spirit.

The prophet very descriptively calls these remnant dregs “sin,” and “iniquity;” although it is not that

sin which it was before, because its head is bruised by the remission of sins. Therefore, the prophet does not only say “wash me,” but “wash me more,” or, “wash me thoroughly,” that is, to-day, to-morrow, and henceforth throughout my whole life, from all the defilements of body and spirit; that I may become day by day more strengthened and established against the terrors of the law, until I become lord over the law and sin through the fulness of thy mercy, &c.—This is the doctrine of this Psalm, and it is our continual school, from which neither we, nor the apostles, nor the prophets, shall ever come forth as complete masters: for we all remain here as scholars, and all beg, as long as we live, to be washed more and more.

These are the two parts of justification. The former—the grace revealed in Christ; that, through Christ, we have a reconciled God, so that sin can no more accuse us, the conscience being, through a believing reliance on the mercy of God, brought into safety and peace. The latter—the bestowing of the Holy Spirit with his gifts; who enlightens us against the defilements of the flesh and spirit, that we may be guarded against all those diabolical thoughts and opinions by which the devil seduces the whole world, and that thus the true knowledge of God might increase day by day: and moreover, his other gifts of chastity, obedience, and patience, that our body and its concupiscence might be subdued, that we obey them not. Those who have not these gifts of the Spirit, or who do not thus use them, but fall away into the remnant defilements of the flesh or of the spirit, so as to approve all doctrines without distinction—in such, the flesh reigns, nor do they know any thing about this washing of the Holy Spirit for which David here prays.

VERSE 3.

For I know my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me.

We have heard two verses of this Psalm, in which David has prayed, first, for grace and the remission of

sins; and then, for the gift to purify and cleanse from the dregs or remnants of sin. For these are the two things which make a man perfect (as righteous and holy before God), without any of our own preparations and satisfactions, and without that feigned repentance, which I have heretofore taught among the people, and which the Papists still teach. For there is only one ground of justification:—the merit of Christ, or free mercy: which, hearts touched with the fire of the Holy Spirit, apprehend by faith.—But if any one will, he may consider the acknowledgment of sin as a secondary cause, or, as the learned say, a cause *sine quâ non*; because, it is a cause only in this way;—that the whole matter still depends on the mercy of God, or on the promise; seeing that, God has promised, that he will have mercy upon those who acknowledge their sins and thirst after righteousness. For, with respect to sin itself in its nature, there is nothing due even to the sensible sinner, (as we have before called him,) according to all law and nature, but punishment and the highest indignation. And that such escape punishment and wrath, is wholly of the mercy of God; who has declared in his promises, that his will is to revive, by a free remission of sin, those who feel their sins and the terrors of divine judgment.

There is nothing, therefore, that can in any way be alleged in behalf of merit. Because, even the acknowledgment of sin is nothing, but in proportion as the Divine promise revives. For when sin is brought home by conviction, and revealed by the Holy Spirit, so that David feels deeply in his mind, not his adultery only, but his whole nature utterly deformed by sin; in this state, if there be nothing to look to but our own satisfaction, David must be overwhelmed by a fear of the judgment of God, and with despair; as I have often learnt by my own experience in the monasteries. There were proposed to us satisfactions, and an accurate confession of all our sins, but still the conscience was not in peace. We were advised to take the hooded cloak, but the same agonies of mind remained even under the hooded cloak which we suffered before: we cast away the

hooded cloak again, but it was just the same. And I find by experience, through the tender mercy of God, that the most certain and most effectual remedy is this:—to know, or to believe, that God's good-will is, to pardon those who are terrified at their sins, and that he commands such to hope for the remission of sins. And David shews, by his own example, that this promise was the only ground upon which he implored mercy, and the gift of the Spirit by which he might be purified. Therefore, about the reasoning part of the matter there is here no mention made, viz. whether or not the knowledge of sin be the first ground, upon which the remission of sins is merited. For sin is sin, and in its nature merits punishment, whether you acknowledge it or acknowledge it not. But the acknowledgment of sin is a kind of accompanying requisite; because, God's will is to pardon those who acknowledge their sins, and he will not pardon those who do not acknowledge their sins. The promise, therefore, is the only ground, the first, the medium, and the ultimate ground; that is, it is the whole ground of our justification. It is to this promise that David looks, when he saith, "For I know my iniquity." As though he had said, I do not allege it as any merit that I acknowledge my sin, but I confess before thee, that I therefore acknowledge my sin, &c., because thou hast promised grace to those who do acknowledge their sin.

The term "to know" is, in the Hebrew, of a far more extensive signification than in any other language: for it signifies, to feel and to know by experience what a thing is in its nature. Hence, the scripture saith of Adam, that he "knew his wife;" that is, he knew her by sensible and actual intercourse. So, it is said of God, that he knoweth not the proud: that is, he does not intimately regard, he does not promote them.

So it is used here, "For I know my iniquity." As though he had said, I am come into that state, that it is time for mercy and help: for I am become, from an insensible a sensible sinner, who now know sin and the judgment of God; that is, I truly feel them. And this

feeling sense is the very death of nature, unless thoughts of peace and a knowledge of the mercy of God, be vanted in by the Holy Spirit — that God does not will to destroy such sinners.

Here it is that we have need of those scriptures, which, without doubt, the holy Fathers had in continual meditation:—that the Lord saith, Deuteronomy ix., although he there speaks of temporal mercies, “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess the land of the nations,” &c. Again, “I am the Lord who blotteth out thy iniquities,” Isaiah xliii. And again, “As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner, &c.” Ezekiel xxxiii. Here it is that we have need also of examples:—that God, when the Ninevites repented, that is, when they humbled themselves under an acknowledgment of their sins, recalls his sentence, and says, “I will not destroy them,” Jonah iii. Again, that he pardons Ahab, whom he had threatened with the destruction of his family, and says to the prophet, “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself?” From these histories arises this theology and knowledge of God:—that God is the God of the humble, the afflicted, and the poor, who know themselves that they are sinners, and who so fear God as yet to have a hope in his mercy stronger than their fears. Such scriptures and examples as these, the holy Fathers under the law no doubt knew very well and held them very dear.

Our devoted ones, however, have made up an excellent simile out of Moses, Deut. xxiv.; where he commands, that no one shall take at the same time the nether and upper millstone to pledge, lest the debtor should be in danger of being deprived of his food. This they have applied thus;—that God does not will that nothing but wrath should be felt; but wills, that the sense of wrath should be intermingled with the sense of grace; according to that scripture, “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy:” and that it is in this way, that David prays to be pardoned, when he says, “For I know my iniquity.” — What is that to me! God might say. If thou knowest thy sin, and there-

fore sorrowest in thy heart, thou hast the fruit of thy doings.—And it is in this way that the law would answer, and would leave the man to perish under the sense of his sins. For the judge acts thus, who always joins the punishment with the confession of the crime. But the will of God is, not to be a judge; and therefore, he has taken away the Law by the preaching of the Gospel; in which he declares, that for him, the punishment is enough, when the heart, which was before secure under sin, is afflicted and in self-despair. Not because there is any merit in acknowledging sins, but because he has in his promises declared it to be his will to pardon those who do acknowledge their sin, and to be wrath with those sinners only who do not feel their sins, but who either presume upon their own strength and desire to be justified by their own merits, or sin in security according to the desires of the flesh, without the fear of God. But these gross sinners are yet better than those, who cover their sins with a double cloak by trusting in their own powers and rejecting mercy.

David here acts far differently. He prays for pardon for no other reason, than because he is a sinner and sees his own helplessness. Even as a beggar who comes to any rich man, in whose liberality he has cherished a hope. That rich man, if he give any thing to the beggar, does not give it as the reward of any merit, for what can *he* merit who deplores his poverty? but he gives it of his own free liberality being moved with mercy.

And my sin is ever before me.

That is, it lays heavy upon my heart, it presses me down, I cannot get entirely free from it.—But here, take care that you understand him not as speaking of his actual sin. The prophet has his whole life, together with all his most holy works and righteousness in his view; and feels, that all these are of no service to him whatever unless mercy reach him. So they say of Bernard, a man of eminent piety, that he uttered these as his last words, ‘I have lived to no purpose!’ This is to have

sin in view indeed, not one or the other evil action, but sin universally, the whole nature with all its powers, together with all the righteousness and wisdom of the flesh; because, all these, in the judgment of God, are nothing; and Bernard with David, and David with all the saints, may say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord."

Sadoletus understood this as referring to the actual sin: but this was, because he did not know how to set forth any better the great righteousness taught by the true theology. For these things do not stand in elegant language, but in exercise and experience, as the illustrious examples of David and of other saints in the holy scriptures abundantly show; of which things, Sadoletus knew nothing at all. But I enforce these things the more diligently, because I know by experience, how difficult it is to beat them into those who have been brought up in that scholastic theology. And we have need of this experience, not for ourselves only, but for others also, who require consolation under a like sense of sin. For when sin is thus placed in view, the mind does not dare to lift itself up, but always sings to itself this strain—Thou art a sinner, therefore God hates thee. This conclusion is true in nature, in the court of civil law, and in all human matters. Here, truly, the conclusion is just, when you say, Thou art a sinner in this and that crime, therefore the king and the judge hate thee, &c. But of this thou must beware as the most deadly poison and pestilence of Satan,—that thou transfer not this conclusion from the civil court to the tribunal of Christ. For there the conclusion is not just, Thou art a sinner, therefore God hates thee: for the right conclusion is this, Thou art a sinner, therefore trust: for God's goodwill is towards such sinners who feel their sins. Were it not so, no one could be saved, not even the apostles and the prophets; because, "God hath included all under sin;" but for this end, "that he might have mercy upon all."

If, therefore, thou acknowledge that thou art under sin, if thou tremble, if thou art troubled with a sense of

the wrath of God, and with the dread of the judgment of God and of hell, trust; for thou art one with whom God will speak, to whom God's will is to shew his mercy, and whom it is his will to save; for it is thus that his promises run—that he is the God of the poor; that he does not desire the death of a sinner; that he is not a God of fury, but of grace and of peace: and therefore, his will is, that the sinner should be converted and live. These consolations are not words of vanity derived from the decrees of the Fathers, or from introductions to religion, (as they are called,) but they are derived from the Divine promises of the Almighty God; and therefore, hearts are by them lifted up, and experience a firm and sure consolation.

Thus David makes this a ground upon which he ought to pray for mercy; “For, (says he) my sin is ever before me;” that is, my sin urges me, it will not let me have any rest or peace; the sense of wrath and of death which I feel, I cannot shake off by wine, by bread, or by sleep.—In such a time of peril, there is no other remedy left, but that the mind struggle against this sense, and say, “Have mercy upon me, O God,” for this is thy time, it is the time that requires thy Divine aid and operation, that thou mayest help and comfort a sinner.” For what would God be, if he knew nothing else but to frighten and to destroy? This is the work of Satan, of sin, and of a man's own conscience. But to be God, is to be able to do, and to do something above all this—to comfort, to lift up, to give life in the midst of all these perils, and to declare that he knows how to do, and can do, more than Satan, the law, and I, know and can do. If, therefore, the law has alarmed a hard heart, and has chastened it until it has brought it under a sense of sin, let Christ also come, according to his promise, and raise up and console the heart thus terrified. Let us receive those consolations by faith, and not become unbelieving of the Divine revelation.—He now goes on,

sin in view indeed, not one or the other evil action, but sin universally, the whole nature with all its powers, together with all the righteousness and wisdom of the flesh; because, all these, in the judgment of God, are nothing; and Bernard with David, and David with all the saints, may say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord."

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If, therefore, thou acknowledge that thou art under sin, if thou tremble, if thou art troubled with a sense of

This I would have the reader bear in mind, first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage.

In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained; which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the *present*. "Against thee only do I sin:" that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner: or, Before thee I do nothing but evil continually: that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character:—I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter.—And thus, the changing of the *preterperfect* tense for the *present*, leads us, from the actual sin, to sin universal. Sadoletus, in his true character as an ignorant theologian, and yet a man great in eloquence, so twists himself about, and so alters the passage, that you cannot tell what it is. He explains the word *only* thus:—that no one saw that sin but God. But who does not perceive the absurdity of such an interpretation?

I, therefore, first of all, restore the correct grammatical construction:—that the *preterperfect*, is there to be rendered by the *present*. And then, that the word ONLY is to be taken *adverbially*. So that the proper, genuine, and most plain meaning is, 'Against thee I only, I do nothing but, sin. In thy sight I am nothing but a sinner. In the sight of thy judgment, I do not boast of merit, I do not boast of any righteousness, but I acknowledge myself to be a sinner, and I implore thy mercy.' So also that passage, John i., "which lighteneth every man," is to be taken as implying universality; for the apostle there implies that the whole human nature is blinded by sin.—That this is the way to understand the passage in question, is proved also by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, who seems to have cited this passage, Rom. xiii. 4; to the intent that he might shew how it should be understood: for in the same place he adds this universality "Every man is a liar," that God only might be true.—In the same way also the word THAT is to be explained.

For David does not mean, that the righteousness of God is commended by our sins, as ungodly men cast it in the teeth of Paul, but he merely says, 'In thy sight I do nothing' but sin. In thy sight I do nothing but evil, that it might manifestly appear to be truth, that thou only art righteous and the justifier of sinners; that thou only deliverest from sin, by not imputing sins to them who trust in thy mercy.'

That this is the meaning, Paul plainly shews in that which immediately precedes his citation of the passage in question. Wherefore, the word **THAT** does not imply any power in us, so as to denote the *cause*, but is simply our own confession, because we confess these two things:—that all men are liars, or sinners; that it might be a manifest truth, that God alone is righteous and justifieth the unrighteous person who is of faith in Christ Jesus.

For here is the perpetual war with proud justiciaries:—they are unwilling to be considered sinners, and cannot bear that any one should condemn their pharisaical righteousness. And what else is this but denying that God alone is righteous? David, however, deeply taught by his own experience, does not make mention of any righteousness, any holiness, or any merit: but, on the contrary, says—'I confess that I am a sinner, nor can my nature and my faculties of themselves, when I am without thy gift and Spirit, do any thing else but sin. This confession I make concerning myself and my whole nature, or concerning all men, that thou only mightest be just, and that no one might know, seek after, or make mention of, any other righteousness but thine.'

According to this interpretation, then, the certain and genuine meaning of this verse is this:—that David, having a view of his whole nature, takes away from himself and all men, all creature righteousness, and, by a general confession, attributes and ascribes unto himself nothing but sin; that this title might be left unto God whole and unsullied—that he only is righteous.

The effect produced, therefore, by this doctrine, is not that which blasphemers conclude. If God be justified by our sin, therefore let us sin the more. But the

effect and conclusion are these.—Since the whole world is guilty of sin, and since God alone is righteous, the world cannot be delivered from sin by any devoted strivings, endeavours, and works of its own; but the glory of righteousness must be left to God alone, who is the just and the justifier of the ungodly, by faith in Christ. All, therefore, who see and sensibly feel this unhappy state of their nature, must not seek any other form or way of righteousness, than through him who alone is righteous.

These two principal doctrines, then, of the whole Scripture are here established.—First, that the whole nature is condemned and lost by sin, and cannot, by any powers or devoted endeavours of its own, get free from this calamity and death.—And then, that God alone is righteous. Those, therefore, who desire to be delivered from sin, ought, with a confession of their sin, to flee unto the righteous God and implore his mercy after the manner of David. Hence it is manifest, that this Psalm is a most blessed production of the Holy Spirit, left to the Church for the purpose of instructing us concerning the greatest and most important matters; of which the former age knew nothing, and which it could not soundly teach, because it had departed from the Word, unto human dreams. Whereas, it becomes us to judge of and teach others, according to the Word: and the Word plainly proves, that God only is righteous. Therefore, no political, no privately moral righteousness, no ceremonies, can deliver us: for whether it be a righteous prince, or a righteous husband, (as far as external conduct is considered,) he must of necessity say of himself before God, “Against thee only have I sinned,” &c. Thou only art righteous.—But of this more fully hereafter.

There appears to me to be so much contained in this verse, that although I have already briefly, and perhaps somewhat deeply, expounded it, yet, for the sake of those who are yet beginners in the knowledge of this doctrine, and cannot receive it all at once, I have a desire to repeat what I have already said, with a little more fulness.

I have mentioned this, first, as necessary to be observed;—that the prophet cannot be understood concerning actual sin. Wherefore, Sadoletus and others labour in vain who interpret him concerning adultery; which was, as it were, the fruit of that perpetually running sore of sin, which is engendered in us, and in which we live and die.

I have observed, secondly : — that this verse is neither to be understood historically nor grammatically as the words stand, so as to imply, that God could not be justified if we did not sin. For sin is not here treated of metaphysically or historically, but theologically. It is a spiritual treatise concerning that knowledge of sin, under which we pronounce and judge, that we ourselves are sinners, and that God is just. Those who do not treat of this doctrine thus, only labour, as Paul shews, in “ profane and vain babblings : ” for they hunt after a metaphysical, and neglect the theological, meaning : or else they err in this : — they understand not sin, unless it be the fruit of sin, or actual and civil sins : and thus, they fall away into an hypocritical opinion of their own righteousness.

And moreover, as this is also a part of sin,—that sin, from the nature of it, remains hidden, and cannot be wholly and fully known, there is a necessity for its being revealed from above. And this revelation of sin is made by the Law, and by the Gospel or Promise : for each doctrine convinces us of sins, which we neither understand, nor believe, nor feel, but when we are shewn them by the word of God. And therefore, the Prophet appropriately adds these words, “ that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings. ” — As though he had said, ‘ We all are sinners, but thou art righteous as thy Word declares. To thee, therefore, I ascribe righteousness, but to myself and to all men I attribute sin ; that there might not be righteousness with me, but with thee only ; and this I do, from being instructed out of thy “ sayings ” and thy Word. For if I were without thy Word, I could not have this knowledge, so as to make this declaration concerning myself and all men. Because, whoso believ-

eth not thy Word, that man will neither confess that God alone is righteous, nor that he is nothing but a sinner. But I believe thy Word, and I thus judge ;—that thou knowest my nature and the nature of all men better than we do ; and therefore, I pronounce that we are sinners, and that, as to our nature, we remain sinners, that thou mightest be righteous and mightest be justified and glorified by this my confession, which declares that I am a sinner and that thou art righteous and holy.’

In the same manner does the Holy Spirit speak, Psalm xxxii., “I said I will confess my unrighteousness unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” This confession or knowledge, therefore, is necessary unto the remission of sins ;—that we believe and confess, that the whole world is under the wrath of God. Thus, the first Commandment, by its very promise, convinces of sin. For when God promises, “I am the Lord thy God ;” that is, I am he by whom cometh unto thee salvation against death and sin ; this very promise proves that the whole nature is subject to sin and death. Otherwise, to what purpose would be the promise, that he will be our God ? For if God promise life, it follows that we are under death. If he promise remission of sins, it follows that we are held under sins : and, “The wages of sin is death,” Rom. vi.. In this way, therefore, both the threatenings and the promises all shew forth the same thing. For they are not addressed unto beasts which remain in death, but the divine will, and the promise of salvation against death, sin, and hell, are spoken unto us men.

I have dwelt upon these things a little more at large, that it might appear, that the meaning of this passage is not to be interpreted in a metaphysical, but in a theological way, as treating of the revelation of sin by the Word : as Paul clearly says, “I had not known sin but by the Law.” Not that he had not sin, or that it was not in the world, but he did not “know” sin. He does not therefore speak of sin essentially, nor of sin metaphysically, but of sin experimentally, as it is understood and felt ; that is, when the voice of God and the “say-

ings" of God come, which thus sound in our heart:—Thou art a sinner. Thou art under the wrath of God and death.—When this takes place, then begins that controversy, in which David confesses that he at last gave up as conquered: in which controversy, human nature holds a contention with God, whether or not that Word be true which declares all men to be under sin and God only to be righteous. For nature rebels against this declaration, nor will it immediately acknowledge that all its works are, in the judgment of God, evil and sin. And thus the schoolmen most stoutly defend this doctrine:—that man has a perfect light of reason and a soundness of natural faculties. But this is not only to deny sin, which is revealed from above; but even to deny that God only is righteous who declares us to be sinners.

And in this state of perpetual contradiction does the Pope live, together with all the schools of sophists. They will not acknowledge that they are nothing but sinners, but contend that reason retains its light perfect; and that, if there be any corruption in nature, it is the inferior part only which is corrupt and which is drawn aside by lust and concupiscence, but that the more exalted part has an inextinguishable and pure light.—If any one should affirm this with respect to civil actions, it might in some measure be true, yet not wholly so; for even in those things, we feel how much nature has lost by sin. But when we are speaking of the knowledge of God, and of sin or human nature, nothing can be further from truth. It remains, therefore, that, to know that we are sinners, and that God only is righteous, is the work of the Divine revelation alone by the Word.

And when sins are thus revealed by the Word, then two different characters of men come to light.—Some justify God, and, as he convinces of sin, acknowledge it with humble confession—Others condemn God as he convinces, and make him a liar. And the greater part of the world are those who condemn and persecute the word, by which they are reprov'd of sin. Nor do I wish, when I say this, to be understood as alluding to

Turks and Jews only, who with open hatred are enraged against the Christian doctrine, for the Pope, together with his church, do the same. For what do they else but deny that nature is corrupt, when they say, that they can, by the guidance of their right reason, choose and do good? Moreover, that common saying of the schools is well known—‘that when a man does all that lies in his power, then God will most certainly give him grace.’ Is not this to make God a liar who says in his word, “all have sinned;” and that, “there is none that doeth good, no not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable,” &c.? He does not reprove of a certain unclean lust, of concupiscence, of covetousness only, &c., but he reproveth of greater things; that is, of departure from God—that the whole of nature seeketh not after God, doth not think upon God, is without faith in troubles, is without fear in prosperity, &c. All these things prove, that human reason, together with its will, is blind and averse to God and truth. And because we teach and defend these things, therefore we are condemned as heretics, and are dragged to punishment. And this is what the Psalm saith:—that God is not justified by the ungodly in his “sayings,” but is contended with and condemned.

Let us then learn, that it is sin thus to contend with God, and to judge him in his Word. And let us rather act thus:—although we should not understand these things plainly, yet, let us believe him who hath created us, and who passes the sentence upon us; for he knows of what composition or clay we are, though we do not know ourselves. For as the vessel of the potter which has been cracked by a fall or by any other accident, knows not that it is cracked, while the potter sees and knows it; in the same manner we also do not fully know our sinfulness. Let us therefore confess our infirmity, and say with reverence, ‘O Lord, I am thy clay, and thou art my former or potter; and as thou hast pronounced me a sinner, I assent to thy Word, and I willingly acknowledge and confess this iniquity which lieth hidden in my flesh and my whole nature, that thou might-

est be glorified, and that I might be confounded; that thou mightest be righteousness and life, and that I, together with all men, might be sin and death; that thou mightest be the greatest good, and I, together with all men, the extreme of evil. This I acknowledge and confess, being thus taught by thy promises and by thy Law, but not by my own reason; for that would cover this iniquity, nay, would even set it off. But my desire lies in seeing *thee* glorified.'—Whoso in this manner confesses his sin, he prays this verse with right understanding "Against thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings."

And mightest overcome when thou art judged.

This clause he adds for our consolation. For that Divine judgment by which we are all declared to be sinners, and God alone to be just, suffers opposition and rebellion (so to speak) from the greatest part of the world: as I have before shewn concerning the Turks, Jews, and also Papists. Nay, we ourselves also inwardly fight against this judgment of God, which, in his "sayings," that is, both in his promises and his Law, reproves us of sin. For even in the saints there remains a working of that blasphemy, which often feels an indignation that all their works are reprov'd. Moreover, there is in the saints this feeling:—they think they should pray more diligently, believe more fully, and praise God more, if they could but see that they were of clean hands and pure affections, and free from all sin: whereas, this is not to be man, but God, or an angel! Thus does the sin which lies hidden even in the saints, work against God. For although their spiritual mind may be governed by the Word, and acquiesce in it, yet even Paul confesses, that there is "another law in his members, warring against" his spirit and the Word. This perpetual opposition, even the saints perceive and feel in themselves. What wonder, therefore, if *they* also oppose, who hate the Word and depend on their orders and their masses!

We, therefore, who embrace this confession, have

this consolation or privilege :—that although we be assailed by these contradictors, yet, we are not overcome. For it is not we who are opposed, the contradiction is not against us only, but it is our Lord Jesus Christ himself who is opposed, the contradiction is against the Word; that is, against the promises and the Divine Law. Therefore, we are earnestly to wait the event, according to these words —“and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” Thus, even our Lord Jesus Christ himself is by the Pope made a heretic! Our God himself, who promises the free remission of sins through Christ, is condemned by the righteous monks and sanctified hypocrites, as a most noxious pest! The reason and wisdom of our flesh condemn the wisdom of the Word of God! But hope thou for the expected event; and despond not in thy mind in so great a multitude of contradictors.—The Lord himself will, both in us, and in his Word, “overcome” the blaspheming mouths of those who will not acknowledge their uncleanness, and who endeavour to bring before Christ their own righteousness!

This opinion of self-righteousness is the most awful blasphemy against God. Wherefore, let no one think that it was said without cause by Christ, “The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you!” For these, as they live in open sins, are humbled and confess that they are sinners. Whereas, those enter every hour into new contendings with God; wherein they fight against grace, and defend themselves. Here, if we stood alone, we should, perhaps, be compelled to yield to the fury of the world and of hypocrites. But here we have the consolation—that God is condemned, not in our sayings and works, but in his own “sayings.”—And thus, the Pope excommunicated and condemned me, not because I was helpless and a sinner, for he could put up with my sins, even as he bears with the fornications, the adulteries, the infamous kinds of lusts, in all his tribe: but it is this that he condemns: it is for this that he excommunicates me and other brethren:—because, we teach the “sayings” of God, by which sins and blinded Popery

are reprov'd. But we ourselves could not do this, if we were not thus taught out of the "sayings" of God.

If therefore we be accused and condemned as heretics, if our doctrine be adjudged pernicious, because it condemns all that human wisdom, and those devoted efforts which we follow after in order to appease God, and if terrible conflicts and perturbations arise therefrom, we have here this consolation:—that he will "overcome:" because, it is not we alone, but his "sayings," that are fought against and condemned. These, therefore, he will defend and protect against his adversaries. He gives, indeed, his Word, that it might teach and save; but if they will not receive it, he will not suffer his Word to be trodden under foot, but will, on the contrary, tread upon the enemies of his Word—and that experience has proved!

This consolation which the present text holds out to us, under contradictions which fall upon us through the excommunication and persecution of the false church and of tyrants, we may apply also to our own minds. For, as I have just observed, such contradiction, or contending against God and his "sayings," remains in our own flesh. When we experience this, we ought not to be cast down in our mind; for, if the spirit but remain upright, and the man believe and confess that he is a sinner, then, although sometimes such blasphemies against the judgment of God be felt, yet, it will come to pass, that the spirit shall overcome, even as God, who giveth the spirit, overcometh in such judgment. But this victory is to be understood also in the spirit: because, in reality, the contrary is felt, and it seems that God and our spirit are both overcome, and that the flesh and the world overcome them; for we find, that nearly the whole world condemns us; seeing that, those who assent to the "sayings" of God are very few indeed. And moreover, in us, and in the saints, the tumults of the flesh are such, that they seem to extinguish the spirit altogether. But deal thou courageously against these perils; and believe, that thou art a sinner whom God wills to consider as a son, if thou confess thyself to be lost. By this confession,

wherein thou confoundest thyself and openest thy wounds to the physician, thou glorifiest God, and callest him to his own proper and divine work—that, as a physician, he would heal thy sick mind.

On the contrary, those who do not this, but take to themselves a certain opinion of righteousness; such, contend with their Maker, blaspheme him, and deny him; they say he is a liar, and persecute his grace and favour with which it is his will to embrace us; nay, they persecute eternal life itself, and make of God a devil;—so great is the depth of human depravity, when we do not yield all assent to the Word of God! But this even the godly sometimes feel, when they have fallen from the Word and this confession.—How often has it been the case with me, that had it been in my power I would have created another God! one that would say to me, Behold thou hast taught with so much faithfulness, thou hast prayed with so much assiduity, thou hast planted my vine with so much care, &c. that, for this thy diligence, thou shalt be much more dear to me! — Such a God, who might be conciliated by our works, nature would willingly serve: but a God who pardons freely, it hates! This the example of our adversaries testifies, who can endure any thing, but our saying that the remission of sins, or mercy, is received by faith only. Thus the children of Israel sought after a God who would reward their works, but a God that accused of sin and pardoned freely they persecuted; God indeed does will amply to reward our works according to his Word, but he wills that this should be done first:—that we confess that we are sinners, and that we trust to his mercy!

Hence then there are two sorts of men: of whom, some confess with David that God alone is just, true, and holy: and others, are ungodly, and after the manner of the giants, fight against God: saying, Thy word is not true. We are not blind. There is in me still something of light concerning God; according to which, if I walk, I shall be in grace.—This is to make of God a trader, and to say unto him, If thou wilt give me the price, thou shalt have it. And in this sentiment all the doctors

of the schools agree. What Scotus say, is well known. 'If a man can choose what is less good, he can also choose what is more good. Man loves the creature; therefore, much more will he love the Creator above all things.' — A theological conclusion truly, and worthy a doctor in a church of darkness! He does not see, that man, when he loves the creature so much, by no means loves it as a creature. For who ever loved a maiden, or gold, as a maiden or gold? This love is polluted with lust and avarice, and never can, in this flesh, be perfectly pure. And numberless other sentiments of this kind are to be found in the moderns, that plainly manifest this contest which reason ever carries on against the "sayings" of God. In the meantime, I make no mention here of privately moral and political righteousness, for even where this is in its most perfect state, yet, this doctrine still stands good; "Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

And with respect to the Hebrew, the word which our interpreter has rendered "that thou mightest be justified," properly signifies, that thou mightest be pure or clean. As though he had said, when thou pronouncest men to be sinners, then it immediately follows, that thou art judged and condemned: for reason cannot bear this judgment of thine, and therefore it calls it heresy and the doctrine of devils. But what of that! They condemn and spit upon thy "sayings," but thou, nevertheless, remainest pure, clean, and just; while they are proved to be unclean. Although, therefore, the text contains a Hebraism, yet, the rendering of our interpreter does not displease me, for it more clearly points out this contradiction and the event of it, and yet, does not depart from the sense of the original. For since the sense runs thus, Thou art found perfect or pure, this antithesis appropriately follows; Therefore, those who condemn the judgment of thy "sayings," are impure and corrupt. And this is—God conquering, and not those who contend with God!

This is the proper and genuine meaning of the verse before us. But let us shew also the rather strained sense

which some here use, that we may in every respect satisfy the reader. For although this is not the proper meaning, yet it is not an ungodly meaning, and is full of consolation ; and I myself have often used it to comfort others, and in my own temptations also. It is this. — When Satan troubles the conscience by the law, as it is represented in the Revelation, that he accuses the saints before God day and night, then it is useful for the man to oppose himself to Satan and say, ‘ What have I to do with thee ? I have not sinned against *thee*, but against my God. I am not *thy* sinner, what right therefore hast thou over me ? If I have sinned, and if that be a real sin of which thou accusest me, (for Satan sometimes terrifies minds with those things which are no sins at all,) I have sinned against God, who is merciful and long-suffering. I have not sinned against thee, nor against the law, nor against conscience, nor against any man, nor against any angel, but against God only. But God is not a devil ; he is not a devourer ; he is not a murderer, as thou art who terrifiest and threatenest death ; but he is merciful towards sinners ; he is perfect, incorrupt, holy, and just. It is against such a God that I have sinned. I have not sinned against a tyrant or a murderer. Therefore thou, who art “ the father of lies,” and “ a murderer,” hast no right over me whatever. The right is God’s, who is kind and merciful, and therefore, forgives those who confess their sins. And he is wrath with those only, he threatens those only, who will not acknowledge their uncleanness, and who deny that he is just in his “ sayings.” ’

This is a godly sense, and a supporting consolation against the darts of the devil when harassing the conscience ; but it is a strained sense ; for the genuine meaning, is that which I have given above. The design of Satan, while he thus vexes our minds by setting before us our sins and uncleanness, and by urging us to perpetual cleanness, is this ;—to make us forget the doctrine, that God only is just and holy ; and to draw us aside from our sense of sin, to making satisfactions, and to a trust in our own works. Wherefore, thou wilt

rightly meet this temptation in the way which I have just laid down, by opposing thyself to Satan and saying, 'Let me alone, I am not thy creature. If I have sinned, I have not sinned against thee, but against my God, who is just, and abundant in mercy.—Whoso in this way confesses that he has sinned against God only, he has God for his justifier. For, because he glorifies God by this confession, that he only is righteous, God cannot but glorify him in return by justifying him. But the godly only do this, who have begun to be born again; the ungodly do it not.'

VERSE 5.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

The prophet proceeds, upon the doctrine of REPENTANCE in a most sweet order: he prays for mercy, and gives the reason:—because I am a sinner, and acknowledge my sin, that thou mightest be justified, and all we confounded. And then, he adds the cause of this acknowledgment;—the “sayings” of God; for sin is revealed by the Word. And the things that now follow, are so connected with the preceding, that they render them more evidently clear. For he now shews the cause, and, as it were, opens the foundation of the whole matter—why he thus confessed his sin and implored mercy: because, says he, “I was shapen in iniquity.” How could he express himself more clearly and descriptively? He does not say, I have killed Uriah; he does not say, I have committed adultery; but taking the whole of human nature in one mass, he says, “I was shapen in iniquity.” He does not speak of any particular actions, but speaks of the matter itself, and says, ‘That human seed, that mass out of which I was formed, is wholly polluted by evil and sin. The matter itself is corrupt: that clay (so to speak) out of which this vessel began to be formed, is damnable. And what need I say more. Such am I, and such are all men, The very conception, the very forma-

tion of the foetus in the womb, before we are born and begin to be men, is sin !'

Moreover, he does not speak of matrimonial sin, or the sin of his parents, so as to accuse his parents of sin. He speaks of himself, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity." He does not say, My mother sinned when she conceived me: nor does he say, I sinned when I was conceived: but he speaks of the mass or seed itself, and pronounces that to have been full of sin, and a mass of perdition. So that, the genuine sense is, I am not a sinner because I committed adultery, nor because I exposed Uriah to slaughter; but I therefore committed adultery, I therefore committed murder, because I was born a sinner, yea, was conceived and formed a sinner in the womb. Thus also, we are not therefore sinners because we plan this sin at one time, and that sin at another time; but we therefore plan these sins, because we were sinners before. That is, a corrupt seed and a corrupt tree produce corrupt fruit: nor can any other than an evil tree spring from an evil root?

But some one may ask, Why then was marriage instituted? Why did God bless marriage? Why does he number children themselves among the blessings, when that mass from which the offspring is made is wholly lost and corrupt?—I answer: Although God is not bound to give us an "account of his matters," yet, this reason may not improperly be given:—that God did not wish that his creature should therefore be annihilated, because it was corrupted by sin. For, is the whole body therefore cast away, because the flesh is leprous? Shall God therefore not give man eyes, because eyes are less clear now than the eyes of Adam were in paradise? For there is no doubt, that the nature of every member of the body, was by far more excellent before sin, than it is now since it is corrupted and polluted by sin. As, therefore, God has not taken from nature the eyes, and has not taken any of the other members, though now languishing through sin; so, he has not taken away increase or procreation.

But however, upon the particulars concerning man

and wife, this is not the place to dwell. For marriage is good, lawful, and ordained of God. And yet, it is not to be denied, that both the father and mother have corrupt flesh, and that the seed itself is full, not only of filthy lust, but of contempt and hatred of God: and thus, it is not to be denied, that there is sin in procreation. For how little does our nature rise above that of beasts, when there is no knowledge of God and no faith in that intercourse; and when we rush on to procreation from mere concupiscence, reason only dictating to us that such an one is our wife? God, however, bears with this corrupt procreation, from the situation in which he stands: for he does not wish to take away his creature altogether on account of this corruption, but he bears with this natural corruption, even as in a government he bears with political corruptions. For who does not see various diseases and various corruptions in laws and governments? What government is there, in which even those who order and execute all things the most justly, do not often sanction and permit those things which are unjust? As the proverb saith, 'Where there is the strictest justice, there is the greatest injury.' Nor is it the fault of men only, but the very laws themselves are not free from corruption, even when they are the most equitable. Therefore, they require an equitable administrator, who may either slacken or tighten their reins, as circumstances shall require. And God bears with these corruptions that there may at least be some established form of government, in order that children may be educated, the land cultivated, duties performed, and business transacted, &c. For to take away all the corruptions from things and laws, would be to take away governments and laws altogether. The greater, therefore, is the madness of those statesmen, who, as soon as they come to the reins and seats of government, want to cut down every thing to the root, and attempt to bring all things down to an arithmetical exactness. Those who do this only disturb the peace. And why do they not do away also with this most beautiful ordinance for the procreation of children, which cannot exist without corruption? A prudent magistrate, how-

ever, ought to labour more after the preservation of peace, than the correction of laws. For those who do the latter and neglect the former, neglect the "beam," while they are busying themselves about the "mote." We see, however, the contrary in the proceedings of God. For although he sees that marriage is corrupted by lust, yet he does not therefore take away marriage, he does not therefore take away the procreation of children altogether. He wills rather to bear with the corruption than to do away with his condition. So also a wise statesman will, in the government, first consider how he may consult for the peace and common tranquillity of mankind, that education and the performance of all other public and private duties may be preserved. And if any corruptions present themselves, he will rather pass them by, than that the public peace should be disturbed by the removal of them.

Wherefore, neither marriage nor any other good things are to be condemned, because of certain corruptions in them. But we are to look to the final object; which is, in marriage, the procreation of children; and in a government, the preservation of peace. But if in a government the formal object (that is the laws) be corrupt, if the efficient object be corrupt, (that is by tyrants, for so I now call them) let the propriety of the whole be determined on according to the better object; that is, the final object; and let all other things be disregarded. Thus, in marriage, if the efficient objects, the man and wife themselves, be evil, if the substance be corrupt, let these corrupt objects be borne with, that the procreation of children, that most excellent and most admirable work of God, be preserved!—But I have merely made these as observations by the way. I now return to the subject.

This verse of the Psalm, then, instructs us concerning the cause of sin:—*why* we are sinners. For the prophet openly confesses, that he was corrupt, not from the corruption of his parents only, but from his own corruption, while he was yet carried in the womb of embryo, and while he was yet in formation; so that, his mother

nourished him as a sinner with her blood in her womb, before she brought him forth. The same also is to be understood plainly of all who are now born, who have ever been born, and ever shall be born into this world, Christ only excepted. And although John and others were sanctified in the womb, yet this does not alter their being conceived in sin : even as in adults, who are sanctified by the spirit and by faith, the flesh is nevertheless corrupt.

And this subject concerning original sin, is one of those grand points of which reason knows nothing at all. It is learnt, like all others, from the law and the promises of God. Paul is the only one of the apostles, who professedly treats upon this point with fulness and gravity. Perhaps, however, it was therefore omitted by the rest of the apostles, because this doctrine was, as it were, delivered to posterity from one to the other. Moses also touches upon the subject in his prayer, Psalm xc., "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee." There, he by no means obscurely intimates, that we are, in the sight of God, under wrath, and suffering death on account of this wrath of God : which death, arises from the feeling sense that our sins are known to God. The cause of these sins and of the wrath of God, is, that this flesh was corrupted by the fall of Adam in Paradise ; so that, man is perverted from the fear and love of God. This doctrine, as I said, has been delivered to posterity from one to the other ; but Moses and David have even committed it to writing, and after them, the apostle Paul. And, without doubt, they derived this wisdom from the First Commandment, and from the promise made to Adam and to Abraham. For from these, as they promise a blessing, it is manifest that this nature is under the curse and the kingdom of the devil, in which are darkness, hatred of God, a refusing to trust God, &c.

This verse, therefore, contains the *reason why* we all ought to confess that we are sinners :—because all our own devoted endeavours are, in the sight of God, damnable,

and God alone is just. And this doctrine is most essentially necessary to the church: neither the Pope nor the Turk believes it: for I can, from my own experience testify, that I, during many years while I was a teacher of theology, knew nothing of this doctrine. They disputed, indeed, concerning original sin, but they said that it was done away in baptism, and that after baptism, there was a light left to remain in nature, which, if any one followed, grace would infallibly be given him. Nay, they taught that natural faculties are perfect even in devils, and that they have lost grace only. But who does not see that these things are direct contrarieties:—to say, that the natural faculties are perfect, and yet that nature is corrupted by sin? The *WILL* is indeed a natural faculty, but they do not speak simply of *willing*, but of *willing good*, and call that faculty natural. But this is wrong. There is a *WILL* remaining in the devil, and remaining in heretics, and this is what I call *natural will*. But that will is not good, nor does the understanding remain perfect and illuminated. If therefore we would speak rightly concerning the natural faculties, after the manner of this Psalm, and after the manner of the Holy Spirit, we shall speak of those natural faculties thus:—that we are under sin and death, and that we will, understand, and seek, that which is corrupt and evil. These things accord with the present passage of the Psalm, and can be proved from it.

Let this suffice concerning the confession of original sin, or that sin which is born with us, but which, nevertheless, is concealed from the whole world, and is not revealed by our own powers, reasonings, and speculations, but is rather obscured, defended, and excused by them. Therefore, there is need of the Word of God from heaven to reveal this uncleanness or corruption of nature. Nay, if we believe the Word, we shall confess that these things are so, even though the whole nature rebels against them, as it is compelled to do.—This is the most difficult doctrine of this Psalm, nay, of the whole scripture or theology: without the knowledge of which, it is

impossible that the scripture should be rightly understood : as the dreams of the moderns abundantly prove. He now goes on.

VERSE 6.

For behold thou lovest truth ; and hast shewn unto me the uncertain and secret parts of thy wisdom.

The Translator, whoever he was, is on many accounts to be reprehended in his rendering of this passage. For, in addition to his having absurdly confounded the clauses in this verse, he has given an impious sense. For what does he mean by *uncertain wisdom*? Far be it from Christians, far be it from a teacher among them who is of the Holy Ghost, to teach uncertainties and doubts. For in these matters, there should be, if it be any where, that *πληροφορία*, that most certain persuasion, or that truth and infallible light, by which God, through his Word and by his Spirit, guards, confirms, and fully establishes our consciences. Wherefore, away with this *uncertain wisdom* which the ignorant translator intimates, and let us search into both the words and the true meaning of this passage.

Hitherto, we have heard the sum of the Christian doctrine :—that we should acknowledge that we are altogether under sin ; nay, that there is sin even when we are conceived and formed in the womb of our mother. Hence, those who in this manner acknowledge their uncleanness and cast themselves on mercy, such therefore obtain mercy, because by this their confession God is glorified, and because he has promised pardon to those who trust in him. After having laid down this absolute doctrine, the Psalmist now, by an antithesis, enters upon a refutation, whereby he refutes those, who either act or teach contrary to this doctrine.

But here we must bear in mind also, that which I observed before :—that the prophet is here speaking, not of an absolute God, but of the God of the children of Israel, who had revealed himself by his certain Word, by certain miracles, and even in a certain place in Jeru-

saalem, and whose promises made to the fathers still remained. This God, is not an uncertain God, not such a God as the Turks worship, but he is a God revealed, and (so to speak) sealed; who has circumscribed himself by a certain place, by his Word, and by certain miracles, that he might be known and apprehended, and that the desires of the godly might not wander like those of the Jews, who, having left the temple and the Word, chose to themselves "high places" and "groves;" and wished still to appear, to be worshippers of God.—Of such a God David is not here speaking, and it is important to bear that in mind; but he is speaking of the certain God, or the Promiser, who has revealed himself in his Word, in his promises, and by his miracles. Such a God includes a future Christ. For David does not view God simply, or absolutely, but he views such a God, who designed to save the world by his Son, according to the promises made unto the fathers. There is a wide difference, therefore, between David, when he speaks of God, and a Turk, a Jew, or a Papist. These speak of a vague God, and act accordingly: for they follow that worship which is without the Word of God, and do not cleave to those external signs by which God has revealed himself in Christ: and this is to lose Christ altogether.—I give these admonitions the more frequently, that we may not through an over-devoted religion lose Christ: out of whom, there is no God to be worshipped or sought after.

The prophet, therefore, enters upon this general refutation, as though he had in his eye some one, who might thus object to this doctrine:—Thou condemnest all together. Whereas, it is evident, that there are many good and holy men, whose life and conduct are perfect and blameless. Art thou, then, the only wise one? (As they also at this day say of us upon a similar subject.) Are you only the church then? Are you the only ones who have the scriptures? For the whole contention is concerning the appellation CHURCH. For that name, because it carries with it the judgment in religious matters concerning salvation and life eternal, the adversaries

furiously fight. They will not appear to have erred, or to have taught that which is impious: and although they cannot deny the open abuses which have by degrees prevailed, yet they will not give up their appellation of **CHURCH.** Just so, the Turk pertinaciously holds fast this appellation, as worshipping the true God. So also the synagogue, and so our adversaries maintain this appellation sword in hand. They pride themselves upon their various worshippings, (as Paul saith of the Jews,) and boast that they have a zeal for God, and that they devotedly strive, by watchings, fastings, alms, sacrifices, prayers, ceremonies, rigid diet, and all such things, to attain unto the promises made unto the fathers. These things, I say, they boastingly object, and ask us,—are not these good and holy things? Why then dost thou say, that we are all sinners? Why dost thou declare, that we are all under condemnation?

In this verse, therefore, faith and the Holy Spirit give them an answer:—that theirs is the wisdom of the world, not the wisdom of God: and that, this nevertheless still remains an universal truth,—that all men are sinners. Whereas, the world judges thus:—that it is holiness if thou clothe thyself sordidly, if thou afflict thy body with hard living and starve thyself, if thou seek out some lonely retirement secluded from the society of men and the affairs of life, and there make thyself different to the rest of mankind. These lies, and this outside show of holiness, the flesh understands and admires. Hence it is, that men are by far sooner caught with a rigid life and eccentric manners, than they are with sound doctrine and the Word. For in the opinion of the world, nothing is holy but that which withdraws itself, as far as possible, from the common society of mankind.

Hence it is, that celibacy, monasteries, that monstrous way of dressing and living, and all those numberless other follies, have proceeded, not among us only, but among the Jews of old, and among the Turks of the present day; who invent and do all kinds of enormities in order to obtain to themselves, from those around them, a reputation for peculiar sanctity. Though we have no

need to go to the Turks for examples. Look only at the hooded monk, and carefully examine him; and when you have been rightly instructed in true and Christian holiness, you will wonder and laugh at those things which our adversaries adorn and set off with high praises: nay, for the sake of which, they neglect marriage and civil duties, as so many impediments to their sanctity. These are they, who, when they hear this universal truth, that all men are sinners, object, with swelling mouths, their lives and their religious observances. What! say they, will you condemn us all? Will you say that we are all of the Devil?

Hence, the prophet saith, I condemn you all together, with all your wisdom, and with all your sanctity and righteousness. For thou, O God! art he who loveth or requireth hidden truth, (for this is the meaning of the words in the Hebrew) and thou lovest not lies, hypocrisy, and a false outside show. Therefore the term "truth," at once cuts off and condemns whatever is presumed upon, out of this doctrine. Moreover, what works or righteousness soever there may be among the Turks, the Jews, or Papists, out of the Word of God, all such righteousness and sanctity it plainly calls a lie; which God, not only does not love, but even utterly hates and execrates. For the term "truth," does not refer to words only, but reaches to the whole life; so that, whatever we say, or think, or do, or are, must be certainty and truth; that not only the world, but we ourselves, may not be deceived by it.

There is also in the world *political* truth, which consists in words and actions: but this is of that nature, that it is intermingled with many vices. Thus, Pomponius Atticus, Aristides, and Socrates, were men of truth, and without an hypocritical outside show. So, there have been among men many husbands of truth, who have been eminently faithful to their wives. So also you may find many an honest merchant. This political truth God requires; and daily examples shew, that no one can do any thing contrary to civil truth, with impunity. But this truth is not pure, if you consider it with reference

to the judgment of God, for there cleave to it many and great corruptions, and God requires a truth far beyond this; and therefore David adds, Thou lovest that truth which is "hidden." As though he had said, The political truth which is in the world, may be performed, and is at least understood, by men. And therefore, Aristides and Pomponius were of great reputation among those around them. On the other hand, we hear daily complaints of the perfidy, lies, and frauds, which men practise upon each other.

But that truth which God loveth, is not exposed to the eyes of men, but is hidden and lies in secret. Therefore Mahomet, although he was politically true, was, before God, a liar. And I, although I was a monk truly, and without a false outside show, (for I often propose myself as an example, as Paul does, who writes that he was a pharisee in truth,) yet, in the sight of God, I was a liar, on account of that hypocrisy and superstition which I did not see, but which, nevertheless, lay hidden under my show of sanctity, (even as truth also lies hidden,) until it was discovered by the Word, and this "hidden" wisdom was revealed unto me.

And it is such as these to whom the prophet has respect, when he says, "Thou requirest truth in the hidden part." As though he had said, Those other whited walls of saints, who walk in a zeal for the law blameless, and hope that they are beloved while they are prepared to die for their righteousnesses, and imagine that both they and their devoted endeavours are the delight of God — these are they, whom thou utterly hatest with a divine and invincible hatred. Because thou lovest hidden truth only, but these hypocrites and proud saints, who walk in a feigned religion, thou lovest not. In this manner, David joins with his refutation doctrine and consolation. For we, who, by the grace of God, are in possession of the truth, confess that we are sinners, and that God is just. We cannot so certainly take it for granted that we are beloved of God, as these do who are settled in a lie; for they boast with open mouth that they are beloved of God. Nay, when we see that the multitude of the wicked

are of such confident brows, and thus presume themselves upon their righteousnesses and their being beloved of God, we are often dejected in our minds. Whereas, we should rather do this :—despise these their rejoicings and triumphs, determining within ourselves that they are as dung and an abomination in the eyes of God ; because, God hates a deceitful outside, both in doctrine and in life. Therefore, the piety of hypocrites is the greatest impiety ; and their truth, is the greatest lie. On the other hand, those who feel their infirmity and acknowledge their sin,—such are in the truth !

Why then do such fear ? Why do they not assume confidence, when they hear it said, Thou, O God, art he who loveth hidden truth ? Hence, there is a perversion of things on both sides. The whited hypocrites presume upon their being beloved when they are under hatred ; and on the contrary, those who are in the truth, and who believe and confess that which they hear in the word of God, — that they are sinners from the time of their conception, and that God only is just ; these, doubt of their being beloved and fear wrath, because nature cannot think otherwise, when it sees its sin, than that God hates sinners. This is our wisdom. But David here teaches us another wisdom, even the heavenly, that the will of God is, not to cast away, but to love true sinners : on the other hand, that God hates those and looks upon them as liars, who fight against this confession and will not acknowledge that they are sinners. For why should the sinner fear, why should he fear wrath, when God sent his Son to make satisfaction for sin. He does not, therefore, dispute with us about righteousness, but requires this :—that we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. This acknowledgment or confession is truth ; not philosophical, which reason can hear and see, but theological and “ hidden ” truth, which the Spirit only sees and hears. This is the truth that God loves ; and on the contrary, whatever is not of this truth, that he hates ; as he saith also in another place, Ps. v., “ Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.” The pharisee, therefore, when he boasts of his fastings

and his virtues, and takes it for granted that on their account he pleases God, is deceived, because God loveth truth "in the hidden part." Although, therefore, man may have political truth, yet, unless this theological truth be added, nothing is his portion but the hatred and wrath of God.

The uncertain and secret things of thy wisdom, &c.

Do thou render it thus: Teach thou me wisdom in the hidden part, or, hidden wisdom. The sense is the same as that of the preceding clause: for wisdom and truth are the same thing: and therefore, Paul uses both words in the same signification: "Holding the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. i., and Corinth. "The wisdom of God in a mystery:" that is, which no man hath known: to which reason cannot assent and be subjected. So Christ saith, Matt. xi., "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He does not call it hidden from the foolish and from the simple, but from the princes of this world, from the great and the wise, that they might understand nothing of this wisdom. Therefore, the reason why he calls both the truth and the wisdom, "hidden," is manifest; because experience sufficiently proves it. For why do the princes of this world, why do the Pope and the bishops, persecute our Gospel, but because this doctrine is hidden and they cannot look upon nor endure it, even as the Jews could not endure the shining face of Moses? And then they turn their dazzled eyes to the scriptures, and collect such mutilated and misunderstood scriptures as these, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." "God created man upright, and placed him in the hand of his own counsel." Passages of this kind they absurdly urge, and manifest thereby their ignorance to the whole world.

This therefore is truth, this is wisdom;—that I know God and myself; that God has promised that he will save all those who feel that they are sinners; and that there is no salvation unless we say with the prophet,

“Against thee only have I sinned and done evil in thy sight.” “Behold I was shapen in iniquity,” &c. ; that is, unless we are persuaded, that whatever will and reason there is in man, is evil and damnable. And this wisdom or truth is “in the hidden part,” or in secret ; because, even when it is taught, it is not believed nor comprehended by the world. Nay, we ourselves often fight against this wisdom, nor can we entirely cast away our confidence in our own works ; and we think, that although we often err and fall, yet we do not err in all things before God. Another thinks, that he is free from rebuke, because he is a good husband ; another, because he is without fraud in all his transactions. And the Turk, although he is compelled to doubt of his religion, yet does not think that God is so cruel as to destroy all others, and to make us Christians only wise ; especially, since they themselves, as far as externals are concerned, live most rigidly.

These things are said and considered by them with great zeal, but they are only truths in public ; in secret, they are lies. Yet, God bears with this political truth, and honours it with rewards, on account of the public peace ; otherwise, this society and life could not consist ; but yet, before God, and in the judgment of God, this political truth profits us nothing ; but we must have that “hidden” truth and wisdom whereby we may confess ourselves to be sinners, and yet may lift ourselves up again when we feel death, conscience, and the arrows of the devil, and say, “Thou lovest truth in the hidden part :” that is, thou lovest those who confess their sins and believe in thy promises, because thou wilt be merciful to such. — Hence, in this particular also, this truth and wisdom are “hidden ;” because, minds cannot raise themselves up, so as to believe in the midst of their sins, that they are beloved of God. In this way, both our own conscience and the world prove, that this wisdom is on both sides very “hidden.” For if reason did not resist this wisdom in those who believe, nothing would hinder this life from being to us a very paradise, full of joy and gladness. But flesh, even in the saints, still remains

flesh, and opposes the spirit and the Word; and according to its feelings judges, that God not only does not hear sinners, but even hates them. This however is the wisdom of the flesh, as I have often said, militating against this hidden wisdom of the Spirit.

This verse, therefore, is a kind of refutation; shewing, that all the other wisdoms and truths in the world are external and public, and rendered, by their fair outside, visible to the world; but that, before God, they are impious, lying, and vain, and especially, if there be any trust in them; and that, this is the only and true, yet hidden wisdom;—to confess that God only is just and that we are sinners; and that, his will is not to cast away, according to their desert, those sinners who acknowledge their misery and trust in his mercy, but to save them by grace! Whatever is taught, believed, lived, or transacted, out of this wisdom, with any view to its meriting, or tending to (so to speak) eternal salvation, is damnable; because, God only loves the hidden and heavenly wisdom. This text, therefore, as I have observed, is to be rendered thus;—not as signifying, that our wisdom is uncertain but most certain, and yet mystical or hidden in a mystery; which reason does not understand; unless it be illuminated by the Holy Spirit. If you compare the wisdoms of the world with this wisdom, you will see, that the former are as uncertain and fluctuating as the sea. For what is there in the world that is certain or sure? Our wisdom, however, is therefore certain, because it stands out of the world, in God and his Word.

We must here also observe, that one sense of this verse is, a *supplicatory* sense. But here may arise this question:—When the Psalmist has this hidden wisdom already, why does he continue to pray for it. For he who can sing, ‘Against thee only have I sinned, but thou only art just;’ he certainly has and knows already, that wisdom which is hidden from the world; not with respect to the knowledge of sin only, but with respect to the knowledge of grace also; otherwise he must despair. Why then does he pray for it? Why does he say, ‘Thou shalt make me to understand hidden wisdom,’ when he

understood it already? I answer:—The Godly man feels more of sin than of grace, more of wrath than of favour, more of judgment than of redemption. On the other hand, the ungodly man feels scarcely any thing of wrath, but is as secure as though there were no wrath whatever, and no God as a just avenger. And this is generally the case with those, who follow some external show of religion. Thus, the Franciscans impiously boast that their religion is most like the life of Christ; and therefore, in this security they pray not at all.

On the contrary, the godly man, the more he feels his infirmity, the more diligent he is in prayer. For this wisdom is ever accompanied with continual prayer. And as the sense of sin never ceases, so also sighing and prayer never cease, whereby we cry after the perfection of this wisdom. This prayer is not a vain repetition, but an earnest cry, struggling against that war in the flesh which we feel, and desiring, that as the sense of sin abounds, so the sense of grace and the consolations of the Spirit may abound also. Hence in the prophet Zechariah, the spirit “of grace,” is joined to that “of supplications,” Zech. xii. For the godly ever speak as being sinners, as they are indeed. But because they are in the truth, therefore God loves them, and they are under grace. As this sense of grace, however, is weak because of the flesh, therefore, even though they have the remission of sins, yet, they continually pray and sigh for the remission of sins. On the contrary secure sinners say, “I thank thee that I am not as other men are,” like the man recorded by Luke.

The reason why the godly man, who has begun to be godly, and has had a taste of this doctrine, still prays for grace, is this:—this taste produces a greater thirst after it. For such minds, do not rest in the first fruits of the Spirit, but would willingly have the fulness. Hence Paul saith, “I have not yet attained, nor am I yet perfect, but I follow on if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended,” Phil. iii. In the same manner also David acts: as though he had said, I know that thou lovest this truth which thou hast begun in me: do

thou therefore grant that I may attain unto it more surely, and may not doubt. For he confesses the evil of this flesh;—that, even if there were no world with its hinderances and molestations, yet, we ourselves oppose and fight against this wisdom; and that our own flesh will not believe and close with that, which we ourselves teach and say.

VERSE 7.

Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Hitherto, the prophet has condemned all righteousnesses, wisdoms, and truths in general; and has exalted that truth only which is “in the hidden part,” or that wisdom which is “in a mystery,” which confesses sin, and hopes in the mercy of God who is the justifier of sinners: according also as John saith, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Here, he condemns, universally, every thing that is of human reason, or that is of man; that is, every thing that men can perform by their own natural powers, without the Holy Spirit; and leaves nothing but a trusting in the name of Jesus. To this general refutation, he now adds a special refutation of all righteousnesses of the law or of Moses;—that the sprinklings of Moses are nothing; and that Moses does not rightly sprinkle those whom he desires to sanctify; but that a sprinkling far beyond all this is necessary.

The law had various sprinklings, which were made with hyssop and with wool, as we read in Exodus xxiv.: where, the priest consecrated, as it were, all the vessels with a sacred sprinkling. The meaning of this sprinkling was, not only that those things which were dedicated to sacred uses might not be converted to profane uses, but that the people might know that all things in the tabernacle were holy and consecrated, and that, therefore, all other plans of pretended sacred things, should

be accounted profane and shunned. This was the principal design in the consecration of vessels; but the consecrations of our apes, that is, the Popes, who consecrate temples and vessels after the example of Moses, have no authority whatever: but are instituted only from an absurd imitation, not from any sure word of God.

Another sprinkling was from the ashes of a red heifer, Numb. xix.: which was called the water of atonement. Hence our apes have introduced their holy water into the church, which they recommend to men as another baptism, and ascribe to it a certain efficacy to wash away venial sins, and to drive away the devil. Hence also, have proceeded a thousand other forms of superstitions, which these mad hags have vamped up. And although it be not evil simply to bless any creature, (for all things are sanctified by the Word, and all things are sanctified to the saints,) yet it is an enormous sin to ascribe unto creatures thus sanctified, such as water, salt, &c. any power to justify. And if that consecration under the law which was commanded from above, had not any power to give the hope of the remission of sins, and could not bring any consolation to the conscience, but was only a rite instituted for the purpose of external sanctification, that there might be a distinction between the holy and profane vessels, what shall we attribute to the consecrations of the Pope which are invented without the Word and without authority! The whole religion of that people was, by a divine command, confined to the tabernacle in which the atonement was made. There they had the sure testimony of God, that God would accept their holy things, and would hear their prayers. And in order to commend this place more unto men, and to lead their minds from idolatry, which they committed who offered sacrifices in any other place, and with any other vessels, God, by a divine voice, commanded Moses to consecrate both the temple and all the vessels of the temple.

The case, however, under the New Testament, is far different. For God is worshipped and adored in spirit, not in "this mountain" only, but in every place: and

moreover, all the sacrifices are completed in the one sacrifice of Christ. Nor do we, in the supper, retain the sacrifice, but the "remembrance" of the sacrifice, made by Christ: and the sacrifice which Christ then offered, we, according to his Word, do not sacrifice over again, but distribute only to those that believe.—Therefore, neither temple nor vessels are to be consecrated; because, we not only have no word of God wherein we are commanded to do this, but we have not now the cause for it, which there was under the law.

The Psalm, therefore, speaks of the Mosaic washings and purifications in general; and plainly denies, that they avail unto justification; but that another purification is required, which is not performed with hysop and the water of purification, but by the mercy of God pardoning our sins. This doctrine, without doubt, offended many; for the sermons of the prophets abundantly shew, with what a madness for sacrificing men were filled; seeing that, they wished thereby to atone for their sins. Hence, even while the sacrifices commanded of God were yet remaining, the most severe protestations of the prophets were made against sacrificing; wherein, God plainly saith, that he did not desire the sacrifices which he had instituted; as may be seen Isaiah i. and Psalm l. Because, they were not instituted of God to the end that sins might be taken away by them, for this was the design of the perfect and finished sacrifice of Christ only. But their design was, first, to distinguish this people from all other nations, that the people from whom Christ was to be born might be made signally manifest. And secondly, these services thus instituted were profitable as a preventive against their making a worship of their own. For such is our nature, that it cannot exist without some worship of God: and where it has not the Word, it turns to inventing such things as we see in the examples of the gentiles and of the Pope.

The Jews, therefore, when sacrificing in the temple, while it was appointed to those services, knew that they were worshipping God externally according to his Word:

but the external worship profiteth not unto salvation. There was, therefore, the true and sure internal worship also, viz. faith in the future Christ, or the blessed Seed. This was the worship that was most pleasing unto God, and necessary unto salvation. But the greater part of them, neglecting this worship, wished to be saved by their sacrifices. Against these the prophets inveighed, and condemned the external worship without the internal, in order to teach them, that they must first believe in the blessed Seed, and then perform also those external services of the legal worship.—The Psalmist, therefore, setting aside, yea, rejecting all the sprinklings of the law, seeks from the Lord another sprinkling and another hysop. Here, no doubt others used to say to him—What seekest thou, O King? Dost thou desire to be washed and cleansed? Why dost thou not use the washings commanded by Moses? Dost thou despise them as useless? Why then were they ordained of God? For they are not the commands of Moses, but of God!—But David plainly shews, that those washings were useless and polluted, if any one should wish to cleanse his soul or his heart by them; that garments might indeed be cleansed by them, that the people might live in external holiness; but that, to produce a purity of heart, and a good conscience, a sprinkling far beyond them was necessary.

This, therefore, is an open confutation of those perverters of the law, who wished to use the law for the washing away of their sins, when that washing away of sins had been promised, not through the works of the law, but through the blessed Seed, which those who believed waited for. Because the remission of sins has been the same in all ages, for “Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” *They* were saved and received the remission of sins, through a trust in Christ to come; *we* through a trust in Christ set forth as having suffered and being glorified. Hence, David here makes use of the same argument as that which is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when it argues thus—If the Levitical priesthood be sufficient unto the remission of

sins, why is another priesthood promised, not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedec? So also in this place—If the sprinkling of the water of atonement availed unto the washing away of sins, David would not seek after another sprinkling. But since he does seek after another sprinkling and another hysop, it follows, that the whole worship of the law was not only useless, but even destructive, if any one joined to it the idea of righteousness. And therefore, he leaves it plain, that the Jews might be washed according to the law, but lawfully, and as far as the law permits, viz. that the people might remain holy unto God in external holiness, but not holy before God in spirit. For unto holiness in the spirit, which is the only holiness before God, another sprinkling is necessary; which is not of the blood of an heifer, nor of the water of atonement, but of the blood of Christ and of faith in Christ.

The whole, therefore, turns upon this point:—that the Jews must use their sprinkling lawfully, or expect the ruin of the whole law and of salvation. For, with respect to the work itself, that sprinkling of Moses might still be observed, if these two grand points be preserved pure.—First, that there be faith in Christ now set forth, and not in Christ yet to come, as under the law: (for the godly under the law were sprinkled that they might thereby confess and testify, that they were of faith in the true sprinkling that was to come through Christ.) And secondly, that no righteousness be attributed to that sprinkling, but that the sprinkled be feelingly persuaded, that they are not one straw the better in the sight of God, after that sprinkling, than they were before. If these two things be purely held fast, any one may be sprinkled without peril. But our Jews sin in each particular:—they both look for Christ to come as though he were not now set forth, and they attribute a righteousness to their services. This is to deny that Christ came in the flesh, and to blaspheme our heavenly righteousness by faith in Christ. But before we admit this, let us rather suffer Moses, together with all his rites and ceremonies, to perish.

We must here, therefore, observe the distinction which David makes. For if that righteousness which, under the law, was commanded of God, justified not before God, what shall we say of moral righteousness? What shall we say of all other works and forms of worship which men enter upon, without the command of God, like the whole of Popery, which consists in "will worship," as Paul calls it, Col. ii.? Let us therefore seek the sprinkling of the Spirit, and the inward washing away of sin, which Peter calls "the sprinkling of the blood of Christ," 1 Epist. i., with which all we are sprinkled who hear and believe the Gospel of Christ. For the mouth of him who preacheth the Gospel is "hyssop;" and is that sprinkling, whereby the doctrine of the Gospel, dipped in and sealed by the blood of Christ, is sprinkled upon the church. And those who do not believe that word, are indeed sprinkled, but so, that the very blood of Christ and the Word of Christ shall rise up in judgment against them, for their unbelief prevents their sins from being washed away. Unto this sprinkling pertain the sacraments—baptism and the supper of the Lord; because we are in both sprinkled with the blood of Christ; for in baptism, we are baptized unto the death of Christ, and in the supper, the body and blood of Christ are distributed to the church. So also under the ministry of the Word, we hear this sprinkling—that Christ has made satisfaction for the sins of the world. Nor does any thing else remain for us to do, than that, we believe these things steadfastly as we hear them under the Word, and as they are set before us and offered unto us in the symbols of our faith, and that we raise up our minds by a trust in this sprinkling.

Nor is there any other difference between the present church of the faithful, and that under the law, than that, they believed in the sprinkling *to come*, but we believe it as *set forth* and *already come*. And this is the sum of the present verse. David, first of all, rejects all those cleansings of the law as useless unto righteousness; and then desires to be sprinkled with the word of faith concerning Christ to come, who was to sprinkle the church.

with his blood. For this word he prays, that he might hear and believe it ; as that which follows more clearly shews. It was by this faith that the saints under the Old Testament were saved, and by which we are saved also. Though our condition is far superior to theirs, because we see these things in a clear light ; nor do we hear them only under the Word, but we receive them in the symbols, in baptism, and the Lord's Supper ; and therefore Christ saith, " Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things which ye see ; " yet still, the faith by which both they were, and we are, saved, is the same. Wherefore, if any one should ask, how David could pray for this sprinkling of the blood of Christ when it was not yet accomplished, the answer is easy : the sprinkling whereby those who believed have been washed from their sins has ever been the same throughout the world, viz. the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. The only difference is in the time ; that is, that sprinkling was to them, to come ; but to us, it is set forth as past and finished. And if any do not receive it, through unbelief, the fault is not in the blood of Christ, but in their own unbelief.

This doctrine is simple, but it is a matter of great labour to hold it fast, and so to confirm the mind as to determine, that no satisfaction, no work, no law, no righteousness, can avail before God, apart from this sprinkling ; because this faith is tried by various cogitations. For civil righteousness cannot be utterly spurned by the human mind ; and the law of Moses also, as being commanded from above, leaves an impression on minds, that that man cannot displease God who brings before him the righteousness of the law. And moreover, our own flesh and reason are too familiar with us, and we too willingly assent unto them. We see malefactors to be civilly punished, and scarcely any one to escape the punishment he deserves ; and we believe that, surely, it cannot be, that the God, who follows up these light crimes so certainly with his judgments upon earth, will not, with the same severity, punish our sins, but will pardon us freely. And here also Satan comes in, who is

a determined enemy to this doctrine, and whose especial aim is to bury such a doctrine out of sight.

It is difficult therefore to remain fixed in this :—that the way of justification lies alone in hearing the Word concerning this sprinkling, and closing with it by faith. For the flesh, under a sense of sin, as it is grieved on account of any one evil work committed, so also it is always thinking how it can patch that up by doing another work. And this natural propensity, use and custom have confirmed. For the doctrine which prevails universally in all churches and monasteries, is, that men should think of making satisfactions for their sins. And therefore, the condition of the youths in this day, is, in this particular, the better ; for they have not been so corrupted by these deadly opinions, as we were who lived under the Pope ; and they can receive that which David here teaches much more easily, viz. that satisfactions belong to the political economy : that we are not to place Moses in heaven, but leave him among his Jews on earth, and in this corporal life. For there is one who hath ascended into heaven, who also came down from heaven—the Son of man and of God—Christ Jesus ! This is he, concerning whom we have received commandment, that we should hear *him* ! This is he who hath taken away the sins of the world ! This is the only satisfaction, the only washing or sprinkling by which we are saved ! And the beginning of salvation is, when thou hearest these things, not to disbelieve the divine revelation, but to believe. And as to what the new life ought to do, that does not pertain unto satisfaction, but unto debt and obedience. For since the Holy Spirit works all that in us, no merit of our own can be built thereupon, which might go towards appeasing God and atoning for our sins, because we are taught that they are already atoned for by Christ.

But as I have before said, this doctrine is held fast with difficulty. While we are without temptation, it seems easy ; but when the time of peace departs, and we are brought under thoughts concerning the wrath of God, then, we find by experience, how great a conflict it

is to believe these things firmly. Wherefore, let all be admonished, that they presume not. These things may be taught and heard, and even believed, but to persevere in holding them fast under temptation also, this is a peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit. So easy is it to fall away into cogitations contrary to this doctrine, concerning satisfactions, and the like delusions of Satan. Wherefore, when thou hearest of satisfactions, do thou determine to speak of no other satisfaction than that which is the true satisfaction, and which is called, and is, the satisfaction of faith—that Christ Jesus bore thy sins. If this satisfaction be held fast most purely, as the only satisfaction, without any addition of thy own satisfactions, thou mayest afflict and mortify thy flesh, thou mayest sedulously exercise charity, obey thy calling, and do all those things which may be done without the word of God: this obedience is pleasing and acceptable unto God, because it is done for a right end:—to yield obedience unto God, and not to establish our own satisfaction. But what does the Monk? What does the Turk? What does the Jew? They perform various works, they devise many ways whereby they endeavour to serve God, but with this view and this confidence:—that they shall cleanse themselves from their sins and appease God. And what else is this, but to deny Christ, who was for this end appointed of God, that he might make satisfaction for us, and that we might hear him, praise him, and worship him by faith, in order to the attainment of the benefit of his satisfaction. But as these self-satisfiers do not this, but remain in monasteries, and hold fast their righteousnesses, their fastings, and their prayers, because they hope that God will regard them on that account, therefore, they shall hear the sentence of the Father, by which he shall command them to be cast into hell, together with all their fastings and righteousnesses, because, by them, they do nothing else but blaspheme the Son of God.

Hence, when we speak of righteousness before God, there, every law is to be utterly set aside as unavailable unto our becoming righteous thereby, and nothing is to

to be received but the law of the Spirit, or the promise—that Jesus Christ died for our sins. This is the word of grace and of promise; by which, nothing is demanded of us, as by the law, but a full satisfaction is offered unto us by the all-finishing sacrifice, Christ! Which sacrifice, put an end to Moses and the whole law. And therefore it is, that David so freely casts behind him that imperfect sprinkling of the law, and prays to be sprinkled, not by the Levitical priesthood, but by God the Redeemer himself, that his conscience might be cleansed with a cleansing which is “whiter than snow.”

We must also here observe, that what our interpreter renders “Sprinkle me with hyssop,” is, in the Hebrew, “atone for me,” or “absolve me with hyssop.” But the sense remains the same; and the word “sprinkle,” may be received; because, atonement was made under the law by the sprinkling of water, to which was added the ashes of a red heifer. And as this sprinkling was performed with hyssop, therefore David speaks of hyssop, that it might be manifest, that he speaks of an atonement contrary to the legal atonement.

But here arises a theological question.—How can we become “whiter than snow,” when the remnants of sin still ever adhere to us? I answer: I have often said, that man is divided into flesh and spirit. As to the whole man therefore, the remnants of sin, or, as Paul calls them, the “filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” still remain. The pollutions of the spirit are, doubts concerning grace, imperfect faith, murmurings against God, impatience, imperfect knowledge of the will of God, &c. The pollutions of the flesh are, adulteries, concupiscence, murders, strifes, &c. And the pollutions of the spirit are increased in the world by heretics, and the pollutions of the flesh by other offences, so that both the spirit and body are defiled.

Although therefore we cannot, by reason of these defilements, be so pure and holy as we ought to be; yet, we have already attained unto baptism which is most

pure ; we have attained unto the Word which is most pure ; we have attained also, in baptism and in the Word, unto the blood of Christ by faith, which, it is certain, is most pure. Therefore, in respect of that purity which we have in spirit, by faith, through Christ and the sacraments ordained by him, the Christian may be rightly called, “ whiter than snow ; ” nay, purer than the sun and the stars, even though these defilements of the spirit and flesh may still cleave to him ; for they are all covered and buried by the cleanness and purity of Christ, unto which we attain by the hearing of the Word, and by faith.

We must, however, carefully observe, that this purity, is the purity of another ; for it is Christ that clothes and adorns us with his righteousness. For if you look at the Christian, apart from the righteousness and purity of Christ, as he is in himself, you will find, even when he is the most holy, not only no cleanness, but (so to speak) a diabolical blackness. And what else does the Pope, by his doctrine, but separate us from Christ, and take away from us baptism, the hearing of the Gospel, and the promises of God, and leave us standing alone ? But this is to take away from man all purity, and to leave him nothing but sin.

When, therefore, men say, Sin ever remains in man ; how then can he be so washed as to be “ whiter than snow ? ” Do thou answer : Man is to be considered, not as he is in himself, but as he is in Christ : and here thou wilt find, that those who believe, are washed and cleansed by the blood of Christ. And who would be so profane as to say, that the blood of Christ is not most pure ? What reason then is there, that any believing man should doubt of his purity ? Is it because he still feels in himself the remains of sin ? But all his purity is the purity of another, even of Christ, and of his blood, it is not his own, or carried about with him himself ! In a household, is not the son the heir of the father ? who, nevertheless, on account of his tender age, is carried about, managed, and ruled by the servant ? Here, if you look at his being carried about, is not the

son, who is the heir, the servant of the servant whom he is compelled to obey? And yet, he does not, on that account, cease to be the heir; for he is born of the master of the house, not of the servant.

It is in the same manner also that we are to judge of the Christian: and our eyes are to look at this:—What kind of person he was when taken away from baptism, not what kind of person he was when born. For regeneration is far better than the first birth; for it is not of man, but of God and his promise, which our faith embraces; as the prophet now proceeds to shew more fully—

VERSE 8.

Thou shalt give joy and gladness to my hearing; and my bones which have been humbled shall rejoice.

It is not without cause that I so often repeat, that, in this Psalm, it is not only the example of the justification of David that is found, but, that the very and true doctrine is delivered, how and in what way justification is wrought in all men. So that this Psalm is, as it were, the general way according to which sinners are to become righteous. One part of this way was set forth in the last two verses; in which David refused all other ways by which men strive to cleanse themselves from sins, and to reconcile themselves unto God; which are, either by the works of the law, or by other works of their own choosing. For he does not only require hidden truth, in opposition to all hypocrisy, but he requires also another sprinkling, different from that which was of the law. And that this may be the more clearly understood, he now adds, “Thou shalt give joy unto my hearing.” As though he had said, Thou shalt so sprinkle me, as to give joy unto my hearing; that is, that I may have peace of heart through the Word of grace.

Moreover, there is a peculiar emphasis in the term “hearing;” though the Hebrew reads a little differently—“Make me to hear of joy.” But the sense in both cases is the same. For what he simply means is this:—that the remission of sins, which alone brings joy, can

come only by the Word, or only by "hearing." For if thou butcher thyself even unto death, if thou shed thy blood, if thou undergo and endure whatever can be undergone and endured by man, yet, it profiteth nothing; for it is "hearing" alone that bringeth joy. This is the only way in which the heart can be brought into peace in the sight of God. All other things that can be tried, still leave doubting in the mind, &c.

All these things, therefore, are to be understood as having a particular point and emphasis in reference to the confutation which immediately precedes. For the Psalmist pointedly condemns, by an antithesis, all those various schemes upon which men enter, when under alarms of conscience; which, however plausible they may be in appearance, cannot bring that joy which "hearing" brings. For the case is exactly the same with alarmed consciences, as with geese. These, when they are pursued by vultures, attempt to escape by flying, when they could do it far better by running: and on the other hand, when they are attacked by wolves, they endeavour to escape by running, when they could do it in safety by flying. So men, when their consciences are oppressed, run now in this direction, now in that; and determine, now upon this work, and now upon that; and thus, only heap unto themselves perils and useless labours. Whereas, the only one true and certain way of healing the conscience, is that which David here calls sprinkling,—the "hearing" and receiving of the Word.

For under the work of justification, we, as to ourselves, are wholly passive. But the more holy we are in our own eyes, the more we desire to be justified actively; that is, by our own works: whereas, in this matter, we ought to do nothing, attempt nothing, but this one thing—to incline our ear, as we are taught in Psalm xlv., and to believe those things which are spoken unto us. This "hearing" alone, is the hearing of gladness: and this is all that we do, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the work of justification. Hence, it was a "hearing" of gladness to the paralytic, when Christ said to him,

“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee,” Matt. ix. So also; it was gladness to David to hear from Nathan, “Thou shalt not die,” &c.

Therefore, the height of all experience lies here:—When thou art in heaviness, or under a sense of the wrath of God, that thou seek no other medicine, and feel after no other consolation, than the Word: whether it be breathed into thy heart by a brother who may be present, or whether it be done by the Holy Spirit bringing to thy remembrance some Word which thou hast heard before—such words as these, “I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live,” Ezekiel xviii. Again, “In his willingness is life,” Psalm xxx. Again, “God is the God of the living,” Matt. xxii. And again, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” These Scriptures and the like, bring the hearing of gladness, whether they be breathed into our hearts by the mouth of another, or by the Holy Spirit. But this also is “hidden” truth and wisdom, which men, who have not an experience of these things, cannot comprehend. And therefore, the doctors of the Pope point out far different ways whereby to remedy distressed minds.

Moreover, this verse is a signal testimony, whereby the ministry of the Word, or the vocal Word, is exalted. For since David prays for the “hearing” of the Word, he plainly intimates, that the Word is necessary, whether it be spoken to us by a brother, or whether the Holy Spirit whisper to our hearts a word that has been heard before. This verse therefore, in the first place, is directed against those, who despise or neglect the external Word, and are carried away with their vain speculations at their ease. And secondly, it is directed against those, who, when confused with anguish of mind, either will not receive the Word, or will not believe it, or flee from the Word to their own works, even as the former flee to their own cogitations. Both, therefore, are wrong—

those who flee to thinking, and those who flee to doing. But this is the only one thing which is not wrong—to hear !

And this is the doctrine, on account of which, we have not only to bear the name of heresy, but even to endure punishment ; because, we ascribe all unto “ hearing,” or unto the Word, or unto faith in the Word, for all these are one and the same thing, and not unto our own works. Nay, we teach, that in the use of the sacraments and in confession, all things are to be brought to the Word, and that we are to take every thing from our own works, and give it unto the Word. For in baptism, it is the hearing of joy, when it is pronounced, ‘ I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ “ He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.” In the supper, it is the hearing of joy, when it is said, ‘ This is my body which is given for you.’ ‘ This is the cup of my blood which is shed for you, for the remission of sins.’ In confession, or, as we more rightly term it, in absolution and the use of the keys, it is the hearing of joy, when it is said, ‘ Believe—thy sins are forgiven thee through the death of Christ.’ Although, therefore, we are exhorted unto the sacraments and unto absolution, yet we do not teach that there is any power in our mere work, or that in the work itself, (*opere operato*) there is any efficacy, as the Papists teach concerning their supper of the Lord, or their sacrifice ; but we call men away from all unto the Word, so that the efficacy of the whole act may be the very voice of God, and the very “ hearing.”

On the contrary, the Pope, setting aside the Word, disputes about the form and efficacy of the sacraments themselves ; and also, about contritions and attritions. By this doctrine, indeed, I myself was so corrupted in the schools, that it was with difficulty, and with the greatest conflict, that, by the grace of God, I could turn myself to the “ hearing” of joy only. For if thou wait until thou shalt be sufficiently bruised with contritions, thou wilt never come unto the hearing of joy. This I found often enough by my own experience in the

monastery, and that with great conflict. For I used to follow up this doctrine concerning contritions ; but the more I afflicted myself, the more my anguish and distress of conscience abounded ; nor could I receive that absolution and those other consolations which those offered me to whom I confessed. For I used to think thus with myself—Who knows whether such consolations are to be believed !—Some time afterwards it came to pass, that when I was complaining to my Preceptor, with many tears, of these my temptations under which I laboured, and which, indeed, on account of my age were many, that he said to me—Son, what is the matter ? Dost thou not know that the Lord himself has commanded us to hope ? By this one word **COMMANDED**, I was so confirmed, that I knew that the absolution was to be believed ; which, indeed, I had often heard before, but being hindered by my foolish cogitations, I did not think that I ought to believe the Word, and therefore I heard it as though it did not belong to me !

Wherefore, being admonished by my example and peril, learn this doctrine of justification which the present verse sets forth—that righteousness is unto no one, but unto him who believeth the Word ; that you may make as much distinction between the word of him who absolveth, and your own devices or contritions, as between heaven and earth. For contrition, even when it is in its highest degree and most perfect, yet is even then, in respect of righteousness, as the vilest thing, nay, a mere nothing ; for by it we neither merit any thing, nor make any satisfaction. For what is there meritorious in acknowledging sin and grieving for it ? Wherefore, turn thine eyes far away from thy contrition, and look with thy whole heart unto the voice of thy brother who absolveth thee ; and doubt not, that the voice of thy brother in the sacrament, or in the absolution, is spoken from above by God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; so that thou mayest rest entirely on what thou hearest, and not upon that which thou doest or thinkest.

Whereas, the Pope acts directly contrary to this. He first compels unto contrition, and after contrition,

he wishes to come to a determination, whether the Word be effective or not. As though the promise of God were not effectual of itself, but had need of the addition of our merits, contritions, and satisfactions! And this doctrine they hold so fast, as even to condemn us, who teach that which is more sound, as heretics, and to load us with every kind of punishment. Hence there is in all bulls this clause, ‘*who shall rightly confess and be rightly contrite.*’ As though the certainty of absolution depended upon the certainty of contrition: whereas, the heart can never know to a certainty when it is sufficiently contrite. Moreover, the avaricious Popes sell these indulgences at a great price. But, O Christ! do thou take away these indulgences, and rather permit that the Popes should be enraged against us, than that we, leaving the certainty of thy Word, should depend on our own contritions, as they would have us. For we have all certainty settled in thy Word, in which thou revealest unto us, that the sins of the whole world are atoned for and blotted out by thy sacrifice, death, and resurrection. And when the heart hears this voice, then arises that “joy” of which David here speaks. For how shall the heart not rejoice, when it hears, that such is the greatness of the divine mercy, that it hath pleasure in imparting grace, and does not look at the insufficiency of our contrition, but simply considers its own tender mercies and our misery. Such a hearing, is then followed by this confidence, that we can say—I am baptized, I have taken the body that was delivered for me upon the cross, I have heard the voice of God in the ministry, or from a brother, by which is declared to me the remission of sins. By this confidence, are destroyed death and every other evil.

I have willingly thus enlarged upon this point, that ye may know, that the way of the remission of sins is not by works, but by “hearing.” The Papists, indeed, chant and pray this Psalm daily in the churches, but there is not one of them who understands what this joy is, wherein the godly rejoice in the Lord;—that it

stands in a steady trust in the mercy of God, and in a conscience not doubting of the remission of sins. Where there is not this trust, or knowledge, or "hearing," there can be no sure consolation enjoyed. For I have learnt this also in my own experience,—that, after all my watching, my strivings, my fastings, my prayings, and other laborious exercises, by which, when a Monk, I afflicted myself almost unto death, that doubtfulness still remained in my mind, which left me to think thus:—Who knows whether these things be pleasing unto God? Happy therefore are ye youths, if ye be but grateful unto God for so great a gift, who hear now the sound and true way of attaining unto righteousness; for ye may say in your hearts, if I have not prayed or done so much as I ought, or so much as was sufficient, what is that to me! I build not upon this sand! If I have not been perfectly contrite, what is that to me also! This is what concerns me, and it is upon this that I build—that God saith to me by a brother, 'I absolve thee in the name, and the merit of Christ.' This word I believe to be true, nor can my faith deceive me, for it is built upon the rock of the words of the Son of God, who cannot lie because he is truth, &c. In this way, minds are filled with the true joy and the true gladness of the Holy Ghost; all which stands in the certainty of the Word, or in "hearing."

But here you must be directed to observe the antithesis. For David seems to have an allusion to Moses, when he says, "Thou wilt give joy to my hearing." As though he had said, I have now heard the law and Moses long enough, who has a heavy tongue. Away with this "hearing" from me, for it is the "hearing" of the wrath of God, and of eternal death; and therefore, I want the "hearing" of gladness, which comes by the word of grace and of the remission of sins. Then shall it come to pass, that my bones which have been humbled shall rejoice; that is, my bones which have been bruised and shaken under a sense of sin; which sense of sin, the law of God wrought in my mind.—But as the disciples of the Pope understand not the joy of

which I before spoke, so neither can they know what this humbling of the bones is ; for they have never heard the words of the law, nor have they heard the hearing of death and despair ; they only talk of these things without any experience, as a blind man would of a picture. Wherefore, this knowledge pertains also unto that ‘ hidden wisdom ’ of which David spoke before. For I have often asked many in the monastery, what humbled bones were : but as they had no experience in these temptations, it was impossible that they should speak, with any soundness or certainty, concerning that of which they knew nothing. All do not undergo the same temptations, but God appoints them accordingly as each one is able to bear them ; and yet, it is necessary, that all should have an experience of this sense of the law and of death ; though some experience it to a greater, and some to a less degree, and some have it even in the last hour of their lives. But the experience of it is always according to the Word—that, under this sense, the bones are humbled ; that is, the strength and powers of the body are broken and wonderfully afflicted ; as is experienced in sudden perils of death, and other great calamities.

But this contrition of the bones is a far different contrition from that of the Pope, who orders us to meditate upon the sins we have committed, and then imposes upon us those most absurd satisfactions of pilgrimages, fastings, alms, &c. But unless there be a true contrition, followed by that which Nathan said unto David, “ God hath taken away thy sins,” it is impossible but that the bones must remain broken. For this wound of the conscience, can be healed by no one thing, but by the word of the divine promise ;—by our believing, that our God is the Father of mercies and of all consolation ; by believing also, that “ the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy ;” by knowing, that it is the will of God that we should hope ; and that, if we hope not, we must suffer the punishment of eternal damnation.—But why should God command us to hope if it were not his will to pardon ! Why should he expose his only begotten Son to a

death so ignominious, if it were not his will, that we should be saved by faith in him !

These and other like scriptures are that true sprinkling, and that most effectual remedy, whereby humbled bones are healed, and the conscience is raised up. But those who doubt concerning this will of God, and look at their own unworthiness, because they are not, in holiness, equal unto Paul or unto Peter,—such can never have a peaceful mind. Wherefore, what righteousnesses or sins soever there may be throughout the whole world, cast them all away from thine eyes, and out of thy mind, and say, Although I am unworthy who should receive such great benefits from God as the remission of sins and grace, yet, God is not unworthy of being believed by me, as declaring it to be his will to pardon sins, as he has promised in his Word. For in theology, this conclusion does not stand good;—I am a base sinner, and vile creature ; therefore, God lies who has promised to sinners the remission of sins. Rather draw this conclusion which David has drawn above ;—I am rather a sinner, than that God is a liar. And while I hope in his mercy, I do it through a trust in his Word which he has declared concerning Christ, &c.

But a remark must here be made to the reader concerning the propriety which there is in the Hebrew. For in the Hebrew, it reads thus : “ And the bones which thou hast broken shall rejoice.” But here a great questioning may arise :—why the prophets with singular caution always take care to affirm, that evils come from God himself, when it is most certain, that God does not evil of himself, but uses instrumental mediums. For thus the Lord saith, Job ii., “ Thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause : ” whereas, it is clearly manifest from the history, that it was the devil who burned his house, destroyed his children, and persuaded him to desperation and murmuring against God. These, I say, are truly the works of the devil ; and yet, the Lord saith, “ I have destroyed him.” In the same manner also David here speaks, “ Thou hast broken my bones : ” whereas, God did nothing else but with-

draw his hand and spirit, and leave David to be exercised with the fiery darts of Satan; by which he so filled his heart with grief and desperation, and by which he so confused and bewildered his mind, that he found no way of escape; for the devil is the father of lies, and a murderer. Such an instrument, or medium, is the law also, by which sins are accused and condemned. And God uses these mediums for the purpose of humbling us, and taking away from us all presumption in our own works, that we may learn to live simply dependent upon the grace and goodness of God.

But let us answer to the point:—Why these things are attributed unto God, when he, properly, does them not, but effects them by the use of his mediums. It is Satan that kills; it is the law that accuses; and yet, the sacred writings attribute both unto God.—The design is this: that we might be kept close to that article of our faith, that there is but one God; and that we might not, like the monks, make many gods. For these make two principles; the one of which they suppose to be good, the other evil. When things go well, they run to the good; when ill, to the evil. Whereas, the will of God is, that, both in prosperity and in adversity, we should have a trust in him. He does not will that we should be in the number of those, concerning whom Isaiah saith, “The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them.” For in times of sudden perils and dangers, our nature is wont to turn away from the true God; and for this reason, because it believes him to be angry; as Job saith, “Thou art become cruel unto me.” But this is to make another god, and not to remain in the simplicity of the faith, that there is but one God. For God is not cruel, but the father of consolations. But because he withholdeth his help, our hearts immediately make, instead of a God ever like himself and ever the same, an angry idol. And this is what the prophets would prevent, when they all with one voice say, “I am the Lord who create good and evil.”—Let us not imagine when the sun is obscured by clouds, that the sun is taken away out of the world altogether; or

that, from a body of light it is become obscurity and darkness; for the sun still retains his light, though it be so obscured that we cannot see it. So also, God is good, just, and merciful, even when he smites. He that believes not this, departs from the unity of the faith, that there is but one God, and makes to himself another God who is unlike himself, sometimes good and sometimes evil. But the especial gift of the Holy Spirit is, to believe that God, even when he sendeth evil, is favourable and merciful.

VERSE 9.

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Here, as you see, David again makes it evident, that he is not here speaking concerning the sin of adultery only, for he saith, “blot out all mine iniquities.” Here also he sets before us a particular kind of experience, which the saints undergo in this spiritual conflict. — When the mind is wholly involved in a sense of sin, then, even the righteous cannot enjoy much peace; but grief remains mingled with the hearing of joy, which will not permit them to take so much consolation from the hearing of joy as they desire. They do indeed taste the “first fruits,” and, as it were, a drop from the finger’s end, whereby their minds are refreshed; but they have not the fulness of joy; they hang, as it were, by a thread, when they want to feel a strong rope supporting the burthen of the body. Thus the saints begin only to taste this “hearing,” but do not drink unto satiety. David, therefore, in this verse, prays for the increase and the perfection of this “hearing,” which shall so fill his mind with this knowledge of mercy, that nothing might be left to cause distress any more.

Of this petition we have need through the whole of our life,—that this knowledge of, and resting in mercy, may increase day by day; even as Paul and Peter exhort unto this increase of faith. You see, therefore, what a perilous thing it is, after we have read one or two books, to persuade ourselves that we are masters of

theology. We have before our eyes examples of sectarians, who, before they had hardly tasted one drop of sound doctrine, became, as it were, teachers of the whole world, and filled every place with false opinions concerning baptism, concerning the supper of the Lord, concerning the obedience to the law of God, concerning obedience to magistrates, &c. Because, as they had never been exercised with these temptations of spirit, and had never apprehended this doctrine concerning a trust in the mercy of God, they were an easy prey for Satan to overthrow with false opinions. Wherefore, let us, warned by these awful examples, pray with David, that this grace may be increased in us, and that we may say,—Hide thy face, O Lord, from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities, that our peace may be full, and our joy full!

And this very petition moreover proves, that the article of justification is such, that it never can be fully learnt. Those, therefore, who persuade themselves that they fully know it, have, manifestly, never began to know it. For since there are daily new conflicts arising, at one time from Satan, at another time from our own flesh, at other times from the world and our own conscience, under which conflicts we are led captive into desperation, into wrath, into lust, and into other evils; how is it possible, that under such great infirmity, we should not often fall, or at least be cast down. Moreover, how many concerns does this life bring upon us, by which we are often so carried away, that we forget this joy. Wherefore, there is the greatest necessity that we pray, that God would be pleased to anoint or sprinkle us with this “hearing” of joy, that we might not be overwhelmed with that grief which the sense of sins brings upon us.

I understand this verse, therefore, concerning the increase of that peace and righteousness, by which the sense of the wrath of God and of sin is overcome. For although the righteous have, in truth, the remission of sins, because they trust in mercy; and although they are, for Christ’s sake, under grace; yet, the bites of con-

science, and the remnants of sin with which they are plagued, cease not. Therefore, to believe the grace of God, and to hope that God will have mercy and is favourable, is a peculiar power of the Spirit. Nor can this confidence be held fast without the sharpest conflicts; which arise in our flesh, from perturbations and distresses in our daily prayers, and from that weakness and distrust which are natural unto us. For although to-day I may be glad in heart from this “hearing” of joy, yet to-morrow something may happen by which I shall be distressed again, from its coming into my mind, that I have done those things which I ought not to have done, or have omitted what I ought to have performed.

These storms and these waves never cease in the mind. And moreover, Satan is ever on the watch to see when our hearts are not fortified by the promises of God, that he might work in us scenes of wrath and of distress: under which, the heart will melt like salt cast into the water. Wherefore, this prayer which David prays is ever necessary, “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.” He saith “all,” past as well as present, and, with the present, those which shall be to come, for I sin daily: “blot out all”—“all!” that I run not into despair, nor forget thy mercy. Here again you see, that the remission of sins does not stand in my doing any thing, but in God’s blotting them out through mercy; as Paul saith also, concerning “the hand-writing which was against us.”

VERSE 10.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

We have now gone through the principal part of this Psalm, in which all the main parts of our religion are handled—what REPENTANCE is, what GRACE is, what JUSTIFICATION is, and what are the CAUSES of JUSTIFICATION. That which now follows, pertains, according to my judgment, unto the gifts of the Spirit, which follow the remission of sins. For Paul makes this

distinction :—that GRACE is one thing, and the GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT another. GRACE signifies that favour with which God embraces us in remitting our sins, and justifying us freely through Christ. It pertains unto the preaching of relation ; which (as the logicians term it) is of no *entity*, but of the *greatest power*. Think not, that it is an existent quality, (as the sophists have dreamed;) for the remission of sins depends simply on the promise, which faith receives; not on our own works, but upon God's calling us unto himself by the compunction of the law, that we might acknowledge him to be the free giver of grace. The GIFTS, or free grants (*χαρισματα*), are those gifts which are freely bestowed on the believing, by a reconciled God through Christ, after the remission of sins. To these gifts, according to my judgment, the three following verses refer. For I consider that these are to be joined together, because David repeats the name of the Spirit three times—the *right* Spirit, the *holy* Spirit, and the *principal* Spirit.

I say nothing, here, about those useless disputations of the sophists, whether David is speaking of the Spirit efficient, or the divine person, or of the gift of the Spirit. For what edification arises from these things minutely discussed, when we have the plain words of Christ, “ And we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him,” John xiv. ? The true Spirit, therefore, dwells in those who believe, not merely as to his gifts, but as to his substance. For he does not so bestow his gifts that he himself is all the while somewhere else, or asleep ; but he is present to preserve, govern, and give strength to, his gifts and his creature. The prophet therefore prays, that, as he is justified, and has received the remission of sins, this sense of the mercy of God may be deeply rooted in his heart by the Holy Spirit. Hence, he uses these words, “ Create in me a clean heart, O God.” For he does not speak of any momentary operation, but concerning the continuation of the work begun. As though he had said, Thou hast begun thy work in me, by enabling me to trust in thy mercy. Now, therefore, finish what thou hast begun. Confirm

O Lord, what thou hast wrought in me. For not he that hath begun, but, “ he that endureth unto the end, shall be saved.”

Our sophists are in such error, that they dream, that it is enough to have begun. For they teach thus:—that grace is a quality lying hidden in the heart, which, if any one hath as a jewel enclosed in the heart, such an one is beloved of God, if he co-operate with him by free-will. And also, that, if any hath this first grace, though it be but the least particle, such an one is saved. We, however, believe and teach otherwise concerning grace:—that grace is a continual and perpetual operation or exercise, under which, we are acted upon and carried along by the Spirit of God, that we might not be unbelieving of his promises, and that we might think and do whatever is acceptable and pleasing unto God. For the Spirit is a living, not a dead thing. And even as life is never actionless, but, as long as it remains, is always doing something, (for it is not actionless even in sleep) and either our bodies are growing, as in youth, or other operations of life are felt in breathing and pulsation; so, the Holy Spirit is never actionless in the godly, but is always working something pertaining to the kingdom of God. Wherefore, I advise, that ye exercise yourselves in rightly understanding these theological terms, and that when ye hear the term “ create,” ye understand it not concerning any one momentary operation, but concerning that perpetual government, preservation, and increase of spiritual operations in the believing heart.

But here we must observe the antithesis which the prophet sets before us in his praying for a “ clean heart,” for he has an eye to that outside show of justiciaries. As though he had said, I see many kinds of washings in ceremonies, both in the temple and at home; at one time garments, at another time walls, at another time whole bodies, are washed; but where is that cleansing of the heart? For their hearts are polluted with idolatries, with vain opinions concerning God, with concupiscence, and other corruptions which are engendered therein, because they have not the true knowledge of God. All these

things, these devoted self-washers pass by, and are only concerned about making their bodies and garments clean. But, O God! do thou cleanse my *heart*, that I might know what is thy will; that is, that thou art good and favourable; and that I might not, by fanatical thoughts concerning God, be led away to impious opinions. This is properly the “clean heart” of which Christ speaks *Matth. v.* “Blessed are the pure in heart:” for this purity of heart is to be referred to spiritual operations. Because, although the heart is polluted with lusts, wrath, envy, and other vices, yet, that uncleanness is such, that reason and the flesh may understand and condemn it. Hence, there are, even among the Gentiles, beautiful orations against those vices which profane men basely indulge.

But the prophet prays against that uncleanness which reason does *not* understand:—that the heart may be pure and clean from vain and false opinions concerning God, and may feel, that God is good, favourable, and merciful, and “desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.” For when the heart feels that God is angry, then immediately follows idolatry; under which, we either persuade ourselves that God is different from what he really is in his nature, and seek other remedies which are prohibited in the Word; or else, we utterly despair. Against these pollutions of the heart, David prays for “a clean heart,” which might think rightly concerning God, and which might love God, as a Saviour from sins and a free giver of life. For he sees this danger:—that those who have this knowledge, are yet variously assailed by Satan endeavouring to draw them to false opinions concerning God.

The sum, therefore, of the whole is this. The prophet knoweth grace:—that he has the remission of sins and a favouring God. He prays, therefore, against that peril (which Satan ever aims at working,) of being drawn away into other opinions, and that this knowledge of the divine goodness might daily increase more and more; that in all things which we do, we might be of a

happy mind, and might know that we are, for Christ's sake, under grace, and that all things which we do please God, even our eating and drinking for the necessity of our bodies, and all our employments; and that thus, our heart might remain pure in the continual and sound knowledge of God, and in a trust in God through Christ, and might feel a persuasion, that in every thing we please God, not on account of any worthiness or merit of our own, (for we are all pollution,) but on account of the gift of faith—because we believe in Christ.

Nor is it in our own power to procure to ourselves such a heart as this; for it is of divine creation, and therefore it is, that the Spirit here uses the term “create.” For all those things which the sophists have written concerning the cleansings of the heart, are vain dreams. And even as such a “clean heart” is not of our own powers, but of divine creation; so also, we cannot defend this creation against the devil. Hence it is that we find, that we are so often polluted by sudden tremblings, distresses, &c. Wherefore, this prayer concerning the creation and preservation of the new heart, should never cease.

That which follows, “and renew a right spirit within me,” is, as to its meaning, the same as “a clean heart.” In the German also, the term “heart,” is the same as the Hebrew, “spirit:” for when we say in Latin, soul, understanding, will, affection, all these terms the Germans render by the term, “heart.”

The epithet *NACHON* which David here gives the spirit, signifies properly, stable, solid, full, firm, certain, indubitable. As to myself, after much thinking, I despair of rendering this term in German, in all the fullness of its meaning; but, it is ever opposed to doubting, and variety of opinion. It signifies, therefore, properly, ‘that certain or right spirit, which establishes the heart against all doubtful and various doctrines, and also against the suggestions of the devil, who endeavours to draw us away from believing that God is merciful and favourable.’ And Christ seems to call it “the Spirit of truth;” because, it does not feign that which is not, but

does and teaches that which is certain. So it is said in the book of Kings concerning Solomon, "And the kingdom of Solomon was established;" that is, "ratified." So again they call those *certain* fruits, which come forth, according to their kind, in a most certain manner. So also it is called the 'certain' spirit; that is, sure and undoubting faith; which does not wander in opinions as children do, but which grows and becomes a most full persuasion; as Paul saith, "I am persuaded and sure," Rom. viii. For when the matter is concerning grace and the remission of sins, all doubting is to be cast far away. Though this is not of our own powers, but of God who createth.

This part of the verse pertains also to the confutation of that outside-show righteousness of works, which leaves the heart unclean and the spirit uncertain. For the monk, who has for many years observed his rule with eminent devotedness, and has done every thing he could do, is yet destitute of this certainty. Therefore, the first thing to be sought, after this knowledge of mercy, is, that this knowledge may remain certain, that the heart may nothing doubt concerning the mercy of God, nor wander about in these and those opinions, which either the heart imagines to itself, or which impious doctrines sow. Unto this gift, the creation and renovation are necessary; which are wrought through the continual exercise of spiritual conflicts or temptations. For there are many examples before our eyes of those who began with us, and who all with wonderful applause embraced this doctrine; but who, afterwards, were by degrees led aside by sects into other opinions, or fell away into open contempt and hatred of the Gospel. Of this calamity the cause was none other, than that, they had not this *certain* spirit. And thus, when they seemed to themselves to be excellently established in this theology, they were led away by an evil spirit into that pride, that they either sought for something new, or, through envy, thought to suppress us. There is need, therefore, of the *certainty* of the spirit; not on account of the devil only, but also on account of our flesh, and of the world, for all

these, as it were, with combined force, would wrest this certainty of doctrine from us. But the following verses teach us all these things much better than I can set them forth—

VERSE 11.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Behold David's remarkable humility ! how anxiously he fears the perils which await those who are justified, and have the remission of sins ! He that had not the Holy Ghost could not pray thus. And yet, he who already has the Holy Ghost, seeks and breathes after this :—that he might not be cast away, that he might not be left to himself, that he might not fall again ! As though he had said, I have flesh which wars against the spirit ; be thou with me, therefore, and hold thou me up that I sin not again as I sinned before, when left of thee ! Cast me not thus away, and take not thy Holy Spirit thus from me : that is, give me perseverance, that my body may be sanctified in me. For as before, he prayed for the certain spirit ; that is, the fully assuring spirit, as Paul calls it, and a full knowledge of the mercy of God ; so here, he prays that the Holy Spirit may not be taken from him, and that he might not be cast away. This I consider as referring to the sanctification of the flesh, and to mortification ; or, to the new obedience which ought to follow in those who are justified ;—that the husband live chastely with his wife, and mildly with his neighbour ; that the magistrate diligently perform his duty in civil affairs, and connive not at the sins of those who are under his rule, &c. For it is well known, what the new obedience in the justified brings with it ;—that the heart daily grows in the spirit that sanctifies us ; that, after we have fought against the remnant of corrupt opinions concerning God, and against doubting, the spirit goes on also to govern the actions of the body ; in order that lust might be cast out, and that the mind might be exercised unto patience and other moral virtues, &c.

To a man trained up in the theology of the sophists, seems absurd, that so holy a prophet should cry out for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as though he had none of them. But we are taught by experience, and by such examples as these, that no one can seek grace but he who is justified; and also, that no one can seek the gifts of the Spirit but he who is sanctified. For because they have received "the first fruits of the Spirit," therefore it is, that they desire and breathe after the receiving of the fulness also; and because they are born again unto life, therefore it is, that they desire utterly to cast away death, together with its remnants; and that they hope for, and seek after, perfection; under which experience, they feel daily, how far they are yet from it. And therefore David prays that he might not be left to his own thoughts, but that he might be kept near both in heart and deed in the sight of God. For to fall here is very easy, as the parable of the servant in Matthew plainly shews; who was so humble and pious in the sight of his Lord, that he obtained the forgiveness of all his debts, through the compassion of his Lord; but as he had scarcely left his Lord, when he fell upon a fellow-servant, and became a savage and cruel murderer.

Here again I observe, as before, that as David seeks these things of the Lord, he plainly shews us, that it is not in the power of our own working, or of our own strength, to preserve these gifts; but that we are placed in this dependent state, that we might not fall; for this falling takes place, when the Lord leaves us to ourselves, and takes away his Holy Spirit; as the scripture saith, "He gave them up to their own hearts lusts:" when this is the case, we immediately fall. For either indulge our lusts, as David in his adultery, or we fall into presumption and desperation. And therefore he saith, "cast me not away;" that is, leave me not by thy Spirit which sanctifieth, for when this is the case, I am indeed "cast away" and undone. And, take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" for he confesses that he has the Holy Spirit, but not perfectly and fully; they are only the first fruits of the spirit. But after

his life it will be, that we shall attain unto the fulness of the Spirit, and shall be as he is.—Thus are these two things to be joined ; that by the Holy Spirit we may be preserved from all pollutions, internal and external, of the spirit and of the flesh, that our hearts may become a pure habitation, to which there may be no way of return to the “unclean spirit ;” as Christ teaches in the Gospel.—Now follows the third gift of the Spirit.

VERSE 12.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and establish me with thy principal Spirit.

This is the third gift of the Spirit which he prays to be given unto him. And truly, the order which the prophet follows, is excellent. As though he had said, I am now justified by the grace of God, because I am certain concerning the remission of sins. Moreover, I am sanctified also, for I walk in holiness and obedience to the precepts of God, and this gift of the Spirit increaseth daily. And now, the third thing remains—that a great and firm mind may be given unto me, which may confess thee the Justifier and Sanctifier before the world, and which may not suffer itself to be driven back from that confession by any perils. I have so rendered this verse in the German, that it might appear that he prays for a glad mind, which might despise every danger. For this joy properly signifies firmness, or a mind undaunted, which fears neither the world, Satan, nor even death. Such a mind we see in Paul, when, with a glad, exulting, and full spirit, he saith, “Who shall separate us from the love of God !” So also David seems to me in this place to pray, that he might freely confess his God, in contempt of all the perils of the world.

And this order also David’s experience proves, for he saith in another place, “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.” For the knowledge of the truth is immediately followed by a confession, whereby we refute all different doctrines. He then adds, that which fol-

lows immediately upon this confession, "But I was greatly humbled." Wherefore, the establishment of the "principal spirit" is necessary, that we may not, under this humiliation, faint in our minds, but may with a great spirit despise all perils. For it is impossible that the world should patiently endure this general truth, "All men are liars;" and especially, if you call those lies which they preach as the greatest truths, and the most exalted worship of God; such as are the doctrine and life of all popery. This truth they endeavour to extinguish by fire and sword, as blasphemy against God. Therefore, we sustain, on account of this confession, not only the most bitter hatred, but murders, and the most cruel punishments. But how can it be otherwise! This our knowledge will not allow us to be silent, and the world will not allow us to speak. It is necessary, therefore, that we be confirmed by the Spirit, that we depart not from our confession on account of these perils.

When therefore David saith "restore unto me joy," he signifies, that he is almost overcome by these perils. Wherefore, he prays, that this joy might be restored, which may be the joy of a delivering God; that is, he desires, that his mind may be so confirmed, that it doubt not that God will be present, and save him in these perils which confession brings with it. This confidence so fortifies the mind, that all terrors and all perils may be in security contemned. Even as, by the grace of God, I also have so experienced this especial gift, that I have freely confessed my Lord and Deliverer, by teaching and writing of Jesus Christ, against the will of the kings, the popes, the princes, and the potentates of almost the whole world; and that, in the midst of a thousand perils of my own life, which were raised against me by angry enemies, and by Satan himself. Thus the Lord saith unto Jeremiah, "I will make thy brow brass," so that thou shalt not fear even though they run against it. And, truly, the office of teaching in the church requires such a mind as despises all perils. Nay, all the godly in general ought to hold themselves in readiness, not to refuse to become martyrs; that is,

confessors of, or witnesses for, God. For Christ does not will to lie hid in the world, but his will is, to be preached; not within walls only, but upon the house-tops, that the Gospel might shine in the world as a light or beacon on a lofty hill. But when this is done, there arise immediately perils of every kind; and we are, as we say in a German proverb, 'fixed fast between the gate and the hinge;' nor is there any thing that can give us consolation, but the promise of God that he will never leave us.

The third gift, therefore, is that which fills Christians with holy pride, not indeed against God, but against the pride of the world and of the devil; that, the more furiously these oppose themselves, the more boldly we may go forth against them. But when we do that, they cry out that we are incurably obstinate: nor do we deny it, for our office and calling require us to be so. Therefore, say they, thou art condemned:—but this does not follow. For this distinction is to be made.—Before God I am so humbled, that I even tremble at his name, and I unceasingly cry unto him day by day, that the Spirit might be given unto me, that my faith might be increased, &c. Here I do nothing but acknowledge and deplore my utter poverty. But when I look toward the world, I find that I have infinite riches. As, therefore, I humble myself before God, so, on the other hand, before the world I rise into a great and all-despising mind, condemning the doctrines of the world as errors, and its whole life as sin. Hence arise fightings, contradictions, punishments, excommunications, &c. on account of which, David here prays to be established by the "principal spirit." As though he had said, Unless thou confirm me against these perils, I shall be overcome with terrors.

As to the grammatical part of the verse, NADIB signifies a prince. Hence it is, that our translator renders it "principal spirit." But NEDABAH is without doubt from the word NADAB, and signifies, voluntary, spontaneous, desiring and willing freely, undertaking a thing with a great mind. And such a spirit is the gift of

God, with which he fills the mind that we be not terrified by Satan and the world : and which spirit, undertakes a thing, not from any law compelling, but from a free good-will. Although it may also be called, passively, munificent spirit, which is given of mere grace.

Thus in these three verses the prophet explains these gifts, which are given to those who are justified by faith. The first, is full assurance, or a sure confidence in the mercy of God. The second, is sanctification ; by which the old man together with his passions is mortified, and the new man arises in a new and sanctified obedience. The third, is a free confession ; by which, whatever is not willing to yield to sound doctrine, is condemned, even Kings, Potentates, and Popes, together with the whole world. The prophet now descends to other things which follow upon this “ principal spirit.”

VERSE 13.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Here the prophet first begins to speak of his own works,—after his person is justified, and born again by the Holy Spirit. For the tree must exist before the fruit ; as Christ saith, Matt. xii., “ Either make the tree good and its fruit good.” As though he had said, In vain do ye labour at the fruit, unless the tree be first good. For the state and pursuit of the pharisees were the same as we see at this day in our adversaries, who with full mouths boast of their good works, and are altogether evil themselves. But how can it be, that any thing good can arise from a bad seed. Those, therefore, who wear their hooded cloaks, who fast, pray, and watch, retain nevertheless their old iniquity of heart. As Horace saith,

The fools who flee beyond the seas
To taste the joys of mental ease ;
To bitter disappointment find,—
They change the climate—not the mind !

So, these deluded ones change their garments, their diet, and their exercises, but their mind remains the same. In true theology, therefore, the first concern is, that a man become good by the regeneration of the Spirit, which Spirit is certain, holy, and animating. Then it will be, that from the good tree, good fruits also will proceed.

Hitherto, therefore, David has said nothing about his own works, and has only prayed for those things, which God is wont to effect by his Word, and by his Spirit. And when he has obtained these, he comes to his own works which ought to follow upon regeneration. Those works are not such as impious Popery exhorts unto,—to make vows of peregrination, to enter monasteries, (which work they have called, to the greatest insult of Christ, another baptism) but to give thanks unto a God so good and so merciful, to extend his gifts, and by them to instruct others also unto the same grace. As they also did in the Gospel who were healed by Christ: for even when they were forbidden of Christ, they could not help proclaiming his benefits, praising him, and calling others also unto the same hope.

These are the principal works which testify, that the tree is changed; that it is made powerful from being barren, and full of sap and flourishing from being dry. Unto this life it is, that Christ also calls his disciple, when he saith, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead:” for he signifies, that the works of the dead are a different kind of works, but that those who live in Christ, ought to be employed in acknowledging and preaching the mercy of God, that others also may learn to acknowledge it. The sum of the whole therefore is this:—that our life and salvation are placed wholly in the mercy of God, which mercy God so reveals through his Word, that he commands sinners to hope in it through Christ. This knowledge is righteousness; as Isaiah saith, ‘the knowledge of him shall justify many.’ Here we have no other work to do; that is, not to refuse the offered mercy, but to receive it by faith. But this very

thing is the gift of the Holy Spirit, because all have not faith.

After justification, when the promise of the remission of sins and of eternal life is believed and possessed by faith, then the next and continued work is, to give thanks unto God, and to proclaim these his benefits. But because the world opposes itself with all its force, and Satan ceases not, to throw various hinderances in our way, and to drive us away from this preaching, therefore, David prays in the next verse, for that animating spirit, which might despise all perils, and, with a boldness of mind, bear a testimony for Christ; as Luke saith concerning the Apostles, Acts iv.

Since, therefore, saith David, this Spirit is given unto me, I will teach transgressors thy ways. But what, O David, if they will not hear thee! What if the devil and the world persecute thee! Why dost thou wish for thyself a work so arduous and difficult as to teach transgressors the ways of the Lord? And what is to become of those holy ones? wilt thou teach them also? Yea truly!—For if you were to put upon those, whom David here calls “transgressors,” their outside show and masks, in which they walk before the world, you would not say that they were thieves, adulterers, and murderers, but the most wise and most holy of all the world; I mean kings, princes, priests, and monks, who are adorned with all the wisdom and sanctity that the human mind, without the Holy Ghost, can attain unto and accomplish. The whole emphasis is on the pronoun **THY**: for he confesses, that those whom he calls transgressors, have ways in which they walk, and greatly please themselves by walking therein. But (says he) they are not the ways of the Lord; they are human ways, in which they cannot be saved; therefore I will teach them **THY** ways.

Here again he intimates the dangers which await these teachers. For the world will not suffer their ways to be condemned as error, but defend them as right ways and righteousness. He, therefore, that will be a monk of God, and not of the Pope, and will enter upon a most severe rule of life, and offer his sacrifices unto God, he

it is who goeth the way to teach transgressors the ways of the Lord. And it will come to pass, that such an one will not only raise up against himself the devil with all hell, and the world with these saints, but he will often have to speak against himself, and will learn by experience, what are truly good works ; and as Christ saith, he will, " bring forth fruit with patience," Luke viii.

In this way understand who are the transgressors ; not those who are evil before the world only, but who are before the world most holy, as the Levites, the prophets, and priests in the time of David. To accuse these of sin, and to call them transgressors, notwithstanding their keeping the law of Moses, is a work most full of peril. There is, therefore, an emphasis in every word.—That David, who had been in a very hell, that is, pressed down with the pains of sin and of the wrath of God, but who is now justified through a confidence in mercy, goes forth into public to teach all men in general concerning the unspeakable mercy of God ; and at the same time, to condemn all the good works and righteousnesses which are in the world, that men may hope in the mercy of God only ; and may know that this trust alone is the true way of salvation, and that whatever is apart from this trust, is the way of death and eternal damnation.

This doctrine never exists without great commotion, for it is neither bearable by Satan nor by the world. The latter, cannot bear that all theirs should be condemned ; and the former, envy men the felicity of being saved by sound doctrines. Therefore, hatred, snares, calumnies, and reproaches, are directed from all quarters to suppress this doctrine, and these teachers. Even as I also have learnt by my own experience. For at first, even bad men allowed those abuses to be condemned, which could not be hid by the church. As for instance, the shameful sale of indulgences was so prostituted, that there were few who did not with patience bear with my exposing them. But when my exposure went further, and to other things which were not so openly shameful, but yet impious, then, the whole body of Satan was put in such

commotion, that it seemed impossible for me to live any where in safety. But this did not take place unexpectedly, for I myself foresaw this commotion : and, among others, the Bishop of Brandenburg, a man of no mean reputation, and a particular friend of mine, predicted, that I should make terrible work for myself if I touched the Pope also. Thus, by degrees, ‘fears within and fightings without’ were stirred up ; to overcome which perils, there was need, in truth, of the “principal” or the animating spirit, whereby I might be confirmed.

But you may ask why the prophet retains the term “transgressors,” and does not rather call them saints, as they are considered to be before the world ? I answer : There are no saints or just men of the world. Therefore, even though some have an appearance of sanctity, yet they are called by the Spirit what they are in the sight of God. And this very thing goes to confirm the godly. For these, because they preach this doctrine concerning a trust in the mercy of God, are condemned as heretics ; for the enemies of this doctrine, assume to themselves the appellation of the church. The Holy Spirit, therefore, confirms the godly, that they might not be terrified at this show and dignity of the adversaries of the Word, but might know that it is pronounced by the Holy Spirit, that all who have not this doctrine, how good and holy soever they may be in appearance, are yet in truth ungodly and sinners. He now adds,

And sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Here another reason is shewn, why this work is good and precious in the sight of God. The first reason was, because it is full of peril, and cannot be taken in hand but by minds first confirmed by a firm and courageous spirit. The next is, this work, even with respect to its fruits, is the greatest of all works. And therefore, although perils may drive back, yet usefulness ought to urge forward : for it is impossible that the Word of God can be preached without fruit. And although all be not converted, yet some are ; who, from being sinners, be-

come believers and are saved. For the event of the ministry is placed, not in the will of men, but of God ; as Solomon saith, " The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them ; " that is, both are the gift of God, as are also those who teach soundly, and those who obey them that teach. Therefore, saith David, ~~✱~~ I will do that which I can do, " I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee : " that is, ' I will teach how the ungodly are to be converted, and will leave the event with God, that some may be converted. Others seem to teach the same thing, when they teach good works, confessions, contritions, and self-satisfactions. But these are human ways, proceeding from the spirit of the devil ; by the performance of which, there is a departing day by day from THY ways. But I will teach that way by which I know that I returned unto thee ;—that after I knew my sin ; that is, that my whole nature was corrupted by sin, I cast myself upon thy mercy, and was not unbelieving of the hearing of joy. This is the way and this is the manner, in which the ungodly are converted unto thee, and this way I will teach. He that will come, let him come ; and he that will not come, let him refuse at his peril.'

Here, therefore, he intimates, that he desired to teach the same things which he before experienced in his own person ; that he does not desire to teach sinners like the Pope, who exhorts to the satisfactions of works ; or like the Jews, who propose sacrifices and their traditions ; but that he desires to teach the whole human race, that all human endeavours are damnable in the sight of God, if they be undertaken under the idea of attaining unto righteousness ; according to this scripture " there is none good, no not one : there is none that doeth good," Rom. iii. By this preaching, reason and all human presumption are utterly destroyed. For since no one can deny sin, what more awful can be declared, than that man has in himself no defence against sin !

After the wrath of God has been preached in this manner, and man has been slain as a sacrifice unto God,

then follows the hearing of joy, "Thou shalt not die." For God does not desire to be wrath with sinners thus sacrificed, but wills to save them, because he sent his Son to take away the sins of the world. This is the true doctrine, this is the true worship, whereby the ungodly are converted. Others, who advise the sinner, when confessing his lusts or his uncleanness, to afflict his body, to go into a monastery and there live in celibacy, do nothing else but convert the man from the idol of Venus and lead him away to the idol of "abomination," and increase his damnation. This is to run from Scylla down into Charybdis, and from the shower into the sea; whereby, when one evil is driven out, seven others enter in; as Christ saith concerning the devil which went out of the man.

.. This is the first sacrifice which David, when justified, wishes to render unto God:—that he may teach sinners the ways of the Lord; that is, may teach them, that the way of returning unto God is, first, to acknowledge and believe, that whatever man does without the Holy Spirit is altogether sin, if it be done with an idea that it is righteousness, because, the person is under sin; that thus, the sinner may first of all be bruised and slain in the sight of God. And then teach them, that God is such, that his will is, to pardon freely for Christ's sake. For there is no such God any where who wills to receive a sinner on account of the order of the Minorites, or on account of peregrinations, masses, alms, &c. Such a God, is merely imagined without the Word. Those, therefore, who are thus converted, are converted unto an idol of their own heart, but they are not converted unto God. For he is the one and true God, who loves the contrite in heart, and who is "well pleased with them that fear him," and hope in him. It is necessary therefore, if thou wouldst be converted, that thou shouldst be terrified or killed; that is, that thou shouldst have a fearful and trembling conscience. When thou hast this, then thou oughtest to receive the consolation, not from any work of thine own, but from the work of God,

who therefore sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world, that he might preach the consolation of free mercy to terrified sinners. This is the way of converting ; other ways are the ways of error. And this, saith the prophet, shall be my service in which I will render thanks unto thee.

But thou wilt say, does not the new life pertain unto regeneration ? Certainly. But even as there are no fruits before there is a tree, so, works cannot be good, unless the person be first righteous, and good. Therefore, life eternal, or grace, does not come by the merit of works ; but those who are already justified and heirs of eternal life through Christ, whose merit they receive by faith, do good works, not to the end that they may attain unto eternal life, which they rightfully have already through the merit of another, that is of Christ, but that they may be grateful and obedient to the divine voice, that the glory of God, together with holy doctrine and life, may be promoted. This order of motives the adversaries understand not, but pervert it. Therefore, there is a necessity, that there should be Davids who may spread abroad this doctrine, not among those only who are without grace, but among those also who are within grace. For these, as they feel terrors and infirmities, drink in this doctrine with great avidity. And although others who are without grace, for the most part persecute this doctrine, yet; this preaching is not altogether without fruit. And therefore, the Spirit, as it is a matter of the utmost moment, urges the dissemination of this doctrine as widely as possible. And here we must observe, that, as those whom David calls transgressors and ungodly, appear before the world to be most holy ; so, this conversion is judged by the world to be heresy and seduction ; as I find by my own experience. The judgment, however, of the Holy Spirit consoles us, who calls it, not heresy, but conversion.

VERSE 14.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

This verse is somewhat obscure, and seems to interrupt the order which I have set forth, but I hope I shall be enabled to explain the whole. As to the grammatical part, then, 'blood,' signifies the guilt of blood, or the crime of bloodshed. Some, therefore, by the figure synecdoche, understand a part for the whole, and consider 'blood,' to signify all sins whereby we deserve blood or death; and that David does not only confess the murder of Uriah, and adultery, and seek mercy on account of them, but in general for all his sins.

But here it will be objected, that he has prayed on account of all his sins before, and has also obtained pardon. How then will the order stand good, if he now again pray for that which he has already obtained? I answer: He professed that he would teach transgressors the way of the Lord. Now, it is not only difficult, but a work full of ignominy, to teach others, and yet to bear the reproach of a publicly committed sin; as it is said in this verse,

The teacher, whose own faults himself condemn,
Has need to hide his head.

As therefore David before prayed for, and obtained, the remission of all his sins before God; so now, he prays for the remission of all his sins before the church, that the church may know, that he is pardoned before God, lest the doctrine, which he determined to preach, should be hindered. So also are the sacraments among us: which we also use for this end, that the whole church may know, that we acknowledge our sin, and believe that it is all forgiven us for Christ's sake. Wherefore, with due deference to the judgment of others, I understand this verse concerning outward absolution before the church,—that God would so take away blood, that is,

guilt, that those may no longer be offended whose eyes and ears had been offended by the sins of David. For who does not see, how disgraceful it is in a teacher, that he should be guilty of adultery and murder?

He prays, therefore, 'O Lord, deliver me from that crime which the priests have it in their power to object unto me. I have sinned against thee: I have sinned against Moses, or thy law: and thou hast now pardoned my sin: because, thou hast filled my mind and heart with a trust in thy mercy, through the hearing of joy. Grant also that I may be delivered before the church, that the course of thy Word be not hindered,' &c. For he seems to speak of the private sin, that is, the murder of Uriah and adultery, and it may certainly be understood as an example of private sin: but, as I said before, it is a part for the whole, finite for infinite. He prays that God would take away all the sin and the guilt, whereby he might, as a preacher, be confounded before the church; in order that, those who knew his sins, might no longer be offended at the sins which their teacher had committed, but might even be the more confirmed. Thus Paul, 1 Tim. i. relates that he was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church. That relation not only does not offend his hearers, but even confirms them the more, and consoles them, when they know that those sins are forgiven him of God; for they themselves also are encouraged to the like hope of the remission of sins. For Paul saith, it was the will of God to set this forth before the church as an example of divine mercy.

In the same way, also, it is not unbecoming in me, nor does it take away from the power of my doctrine, that I confess that I also was among the monsters of the Pope, that I was made a monk, and that, both by my masses and by my whole course of life, I not only denied, but crucified afresh, Christ my Redeemer. For I lived wholly in that confidence in my own righteousness, that if any one had then taught those things, which, by the grace of God, I now teach and believe, I think I could have torn him to pieces with

my teeth. But it is now more sweet for the church to hear, that the Lord delivered me from all those blasphemies, and made me a faithful preacher of his Word and righteousness.

In the same way, also, David prays to be delivered from "blood-guiltiness;" that is, to be delivered from his guilt before the church also; that, as he has been pardoned of God, so also he may be delivered from the law, and might freely lift up his face before the church. Even as I also have learnt in my own experience, that I crucified Christ, both in my order and before my order. This confession of sin, does not cause the Word to be despised, but increases in the hearers a trust in mercy, and is also well pleasing unto Christ. And therefore the prophet adds—

And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

This refers to the preaching of the Word. As though he had said, When I shall be thus absolved before the world, and shall be justified before thee and before men, then shall my tongue sing aloud; that is, declare and preach with joy thy righteousness; that is, thy grace, whereby thou pardonest sins, and hast mercy.

Moreover, this term "righteousness," cost me much labour. For they used generally to explain it thus:—that righteousness, signifieth that truth, whereby God condemns according to desert, or judges the undeserving. And they set righteousness in opposition to that mercy, whereby those who believe are saved. This exposition is most perilous; and in addition to its being vain, it raises a secret hatred against God and his righteousness. For who can love him, who will deal with sinners according to righteousness? Wherefore, remember ye, that the righteousness of God is that, by which we are justified, or receive the remission of sins. This righteousness in God is sweet; for it makes God, not a just judge, but a pardoning Father; who desires to use this righteousness, not to judge, but to justify and

pardon sinners. This thy righteousness, saith David, not the righteousness of men, or of Moses, I will preach with joy and gladness, even if I am to have all men my enemies. Do thou only do this:—absolve me before the church, that I may go forth in public without shame, and may not blush on account of my sins, which are known also unto the church.—It is an illustrious example for the consolation of those, who are in the ministry of the Word, and yet are reprehensible on account of their past actions: for I have said that here, also, as in a general doctrine, the part is put for the whole.

VERSE 15.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

In the canonical services it is appointed; with great wisdom perhaps, that they should begin with this verse. And with respect to the public confession, and praises of God in the church, it is used well. But in private prayers, there is less need for this commencement; because there, there is no danger to be feared from tyrants. And here also, the prophet does not treat of a private intercourse between the sinner and God, but he is speaking of the whole church, of the ministry and ministers, and of the whole people of God. For they who are already justified, have nothing else to do but to say with David, “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.” And, “Come ye, and behold the works of the Lord.” And again, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” The prophet intends the same in this place also. Now that he is justified before God through free mercy, which he apprehends, by faith, and is also absolved from his guilt before the church, so that his past sins are no longer an offence, but a consolation to the church; he prays, that the Lord would open his lips, that he might preach the mercy of God freely, and without fear, in public, and not in a corner, as the fanatics do.

By his entreating of the Lord that his “lips” may be

opened, he signifies, how arduous a work this sacrifice of praise is, which he requires in the 50th Psalm. For it is a boldness above all boldness, a courage above all courage, and a fortitude above all fortitude, to dare to speak in public, and to confess the name of the Lord. For here is Satan with every kind of snare, that he may hinder this confession: and if all these snares could be seen with the human eye, it would soon appear, why the prophet prayed before to be confirmed by the Spirit, and now desires that his lips might be opened by the Lord himself;—not to pray over the canonical prayers, but to bear the name of the Lord before the devil, the world, kings, princes, and all flesh. For here there are many things to shut the lips. Sometimes the fear of perils, sometimes the hope of gain, and often the advice of friends, interpose, by which Satan strives to hinder this sacrifice. This I have often found by experience; and yet, the Lord was present, and in all great causes where the glory of God was at stake, God was present, and opened my mouth in the face of all these obstacles.

Here, therefore, he teaches concerning the public confession and preaching of him who is now justified; that we may learn, how hard a thing it is to dare to speak what you have experienced. For not only Satan, but the tyranny of princes and kings, nay our own sins and flesh will hinder this confession. Yet, on the other hand, the Spirit urges us on, as Peter saith, Acts iv. “We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.” This Spirit, prays with many groans this prayer before God;—‘that he would open our lips to shew forth his praise.’

And here I would have you remember, that wherever these expressions occur in the Holy Scriptures,—to show forth the praises of God, his righteousness, &c. great perils are also signified. For, for a man to speak the praises of God, is to expose himself to the devil, to the world, to the flesh, and to all evils. For how wilt thou praise God without first bringing in guilty, and

condemning the whole world, with all its righteousnesses? And whoever does this, brings upon himself, not hatred only, but open perils. On the contrary, those who teach orders, invocations of saints, merits, fraternities, and the like, praise not God, but themselves; and therefore, they are easily tolerated and received by the world. Hence, the prophet saith, "O Lord, open thou my lips," and grant, that I may with confidence call unto, teach, and instruct others in that which I myself have learnt:—that thou alone art worthy to be praised and glorified for ever, who freely justifiest the ungodly, &c.

Here you find who that justified person is, and what works he especially chooses; not fasting, not abstinence, not the hair-cloth garment of John, not a desert, &c. which yet are a something; but if you compare this most exalted service with the preaching of the name of the Lord, it is a game and a jest, not only in those bug-bears of the Pope, but even in the saints themselves. For John was not so great a person merely because he clothed himself in skins, and drank not wine or strong drink; but because he was filled with the Spirit, and dared to call the pharisees a "generation of vipers;" because he dared say to the tyrant, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife;" and because he dared bear this testimony for Christ before the whole people, and in the midst of his despisers, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." These are the things that exalt John, and make him the greatest "of them that are born of women." The desert, the skins, the meat, and the drink, any bad man may imitate, and that without peril; but the office of teaching, no one can undertake without peril. And indeed it is manifest, what kind of a reward John obtained for it, when he was so basely beheaded by the will of a woman. Those, therefore, who would undertake a great work, and a work worthy of a Christian man, let them not praise the fooleries of the Pope, nor the private exercises and afflictions of the saints, but let them praise this;—con-

fessing the name of the Lord before the world. For this is the courage of all courage, and a work the greatest and most difficult.

In a body politic, it is manifest, how few there are who can undertake the management of the state with magnanimity, and despise private perils ; and it often happens as Cicero says, ‘ that those who come to the administration of the state with the hope of the greatest reward, cannot be free from the fear of the greatest punishment.’ And indeed the examples of Themistocles, Cicero, Demosthenes, and other great political characters, afford a sufficient proof, that such a course of life is most replete with perils. For it is only acting a woman’s part, to sit down in a private corner and censure the actions of others. But to go into the senate and the assemblage of princes, and declare their sentiments freely, few have courage to do, though it be most useful and necessary. How much more great and momentous do you imagine it must be, to speak of, and teach, sacred things in the sight of God and of angels, against the will, not of princes and kings only, but of the devil and the whole world ! Here the peril is far greater than in states ; although even there, magnanimity is necessary ; but here, even the Spirit of God is necessary, and the finger of God, whereby the lips may be loosed, and the mouth opened to shew forth the praise of God.

Therefore, after justification and grace, there is no greater work than to speak the truth concerning Christ. As to corporal exercises, not men only but beasts, may be afflicted by fastings and the like : and it is reported, that the severity of the Turks in corporal afflictions is great. Among Christians indeed all exercises are to be attended to, which pertain unto the bridling or mortifying of the flesh ; but to dare, for the name of Christ, to expose ones self to the peril of life and possessions, requires the “ principal spirit,” and this prayer, “ O Lord, open thou my lips.” And now, he gives the reason why, after he was justified, he knew nothing else, and could do nothing else, but give thanks by preaching the name of God.—He says,

VERSE 17.

For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee; thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

This is the reason why he desires to shew forth the praises of the Lord.—Because, says he, sacrifices do not please thee. But is not this the voice of a heretic, to say, while the whole law and the whole worship of God were standing, “Thou desirest not sacrifice:” “Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings?” I for my part have often wondered at this audacity of the prophets, who spoke with such contempt of the sacrifices, contrary to the law of Moses and the worship of their people. For if the Pope could have proved his rites and ceremonies from the word of God, as the Jews could prove their sacrifices, I certainly never should have dared to open my mouth against him! But now, since he has ordained and commanded these things without, yea, against the Word, I condemn him with all authority. But how much less is this victory of mine over the church and ceremonies of the Pope, than that of the prophets who thus opposed the sacrifices of the law? For the priests were not without the scriptures on their side, as the Pope is. Because the Pope has nothing whatever whereby to defend himself and his traditions, but the empty title of church: but those under the law, knew that the sacrifices were commanded of God.

Here, therefore, David seems to speak plainly against the scripture and Moses, because he has a manifest testimony, that these ceremonies were enjoined the people, according to the will of God. For it is well known, with what care all things, which belonged to the tabernacle and the sacred rites, are commanded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The examples of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, &c. are also well known, who all testified their gratitude by sacrifices. To say so plainly therefore, contrary to the express command of God, and contrary to the examples of all the saints, “Thou desirest not sacrifice,” has the appearance of

wright heresy. And before we explain this, we may serve, if the Holy Spirit in David condemns the sacrifices commanded of God, with what face will the Monks be to boast of their hooded cloaks and orders, their beards and shaven pates, as holiness! With what face will the Popes dare to attribute any righteousness to their traditions, when all these are instituted without the word of God! Wherefore, receive this verse as directed: only against the law, but against the whole of Popery, together with all its traditions, rites, and forms of worship;—that they are displeasing in the sight of God.

As, therefore, David comes to this especial point, and condemns the highest worship of the law which was instituted of God, he makes thereby a most manifest distinction between all the religions in the world, even that which was instituted by Moses and commanded of God, and separates from all these religions, this one which is by faith in Christ; whereby sins are remitted and righteousness and eternal life are given without works and without merits, only because God is merciful and doneth through Christ. This religion teaches, that works and forms of worship are not to be instituted with view to pleasing God thereby; that sin cannot be pardoned for by any sacrifices, nor by any moral rules, nor by any human work whatever; that works are, indeed good and holy, and please God; but that, if they be done for any other motive than because they are commanded of God, God is not only not appeased by them, but is offended. For if burnt-offerings do not please God, what folly is it to presume upon those things which we choose to ourselves, without the word of God! Wherefore David saith, Psalm l., ‘I will take no lock out of thy house, for every beast of the forest is mine. The world is mine and the fulness thereof.’ As though he had said, ‘In vain do ye think to appease me with your works, for it is all by my gift that ye have your very soul, your senses, and your whole life. If therefore I had need of those things which ye have, or which ye can do, I should not give them unto you. For whence do the Monks derive his fasting, his praying, and his

other will-works but from this,—my giving him the will and the power to do them? If then I give these things why dost thou return them to me as though I wanted and stood in need of them.' Wherefore, all that we have left to do towards God, is, to give him thanks. For whatever we are, or live, or have, are the gifts of God: as it is said also, Rom. xi., "Who hath first given to him?" When therefore we do all that we can, we do nothing more than return that which we have received:—and what mighty thing is there in doing that?

Here the justiciaries answer, 'We want to deserve something, and to maintain the Freedom of the Will.'—This is to render unto God, not his own, but, as it were, our own. But even reason will prove this to be impiety and folly;—for a man to pretend that he does any thing great, who is liberal in that which is not his own, but which belongs to another. Wherefore, what we should do is this;—return glory to God by acknowledging that whatever we have, or can do, is all from his free goodness, because it is he who confirms us by his Spirit, who opens our mouth, and fills it with his praise, &c.

This passage goes, therefore, not only to console and teach us, but also to refute our adversaries. For when we produce this passage of Paul to prove what righteousness is, that "a man is justified without the works of the law," they cavil at it, by saying, that the ceremonial, not moral works, are to be there understood. Even as Sadoletus does in his Commentary on the Romans; wherein, he so twists and turns this passage of Paul, that he not only does not arrive at Paul's meaning, but is no where consistent with himself. In this way the adversaries of our doctrine make it manifest, that they are altogether ignorant of the holy scripture, and cannot even attain to the knowledge of the simple point, what the ceremonial laws or ceremonial works are. For when they expound Paul thus:—we are justified without the works of the law, that is, without the ceremonies, because the ceremonies are abolished; this is nothing more or less than proving, that those ceremonies were abolished even in the time of Moses, and that it was a matter of

option to be circumcised or not to be circumcised, to sacrifice or not to sacrifice, because, even in the time of Moses, these things justified not, as is manifest from the present passage. But who can have patience to hear a theologian say this? For if these ceremonials are not necessary unto righteousness now, because they are abolished, what shall we say when we go back to the times of David, when they were not yet abolished, but were considered as most exalted, and holy works and necessary? Did they justify then? By no means: for we have this Word, "Thou desirest not sacrifice!"

Moreover, it is not right to take so much from ceremonies: for the command of God concerning the Sabbath is a ceremonial, and yet, it is placed in the first table, before and above all moral works. Therefore, it is a cavillation unbecoming a theologian, nay, unbecoming a man of common education, to think, when Paul speaks of the works of the law, that he speaks of the ceremonials merely as works of an order inferior to that of moral works. Look at the times of the Old Testament, and you will find, that there was not only a great necessity for, but a great dignity in, ceremonies. For although ceremonials are now either optional or abolished, yet, under the law, they were not free but necessary; and yet it was true, even then, that a man was justified "without the works of the law." Wherefore, Paul speaks plainly of the whole law; that is, of ceremonial work as well as moral;—that righteousness is not given by them; but that the only righteousness is, to apprehend mercy; which mercy is, that which imputes not sin, but pardons those who believe in Christ. This is the truth which Paul defends in his Epistle to the Romans, which, whosoever does not understand to be the main point of all his arguments, cannot see the least shadow of the real mind of Paul.

It is this same truth that David sets forth in the present passage, when, in his own time, while sacrifices and the temple were in their greatest-glory, before the time of the New Testament, he saith, in the plainest

terms, that sacrifices are nothing, and that God does not regard them. This is plainly to take away the whole legal worship, though commanded and instituted of God as it ought to be. And although the dignity of ceremonies is not to be spoken lightly of, (for we see from the command and Word of God that they were not only approved, but even instituted and ordained), yet David saith, "Thou desirest them not." Also, Isaiah i. "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and of the fat of fed beasts." And again, in the preceding Psalm, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, &c." Sermons of this sort were, without doubt, condemned by the priests as heretical, and the prophets themselves were slain because of them.

But we must also shew the reason why the prophets in this manner condemned those sacrifices which were the highest worship of God under the law; for the matter seems to carry with it a peculiar difficulty; because, those things are condemned by the prophets which were commanded by a divine voice. But the sermons of the prophets, which are of this nature, are not so to be understood as though the rites and ceremonies themselves were condemned; the prophets look most at the *motives* from which those ceremonies were performed by the ungodly. Because the end of those legal sacrifices and forms of worship, was not, that by them men might be justified and might please God. This end was, from the sin of Adam, reserved unto the one sacrifice of Christ; of which the sacrifices of the law were a shadow. For in addition to God's willing, that by this worship of sacrifices, his people should be distinguished from all other nations, and their obedience should be testified thereby, the sacrifices were signs of the future sacrifice of Christ; whereby the people were reminded of the redemption to come.

Whereas, the greatest part of the Jews, being thus corrupted by their priests, performed the sacrifices with this opinion:—that by them they should obtain the remission of sins. But this was making the blood of a

bull equal to the blood of Christ, and the sacrifice of a brute equal to the sacrifice of the Son of God. It was on account of this iniquity, which false opinions concerning the legal sacrifices tended to confirm, that the prophets inveighed so severely against sacrifices; not with respect to their formal object, but with respect to their final object. Because, the sacred rites were for the most part performed in a place appointed of God, and according to the command of God; so that, nothing could be censured as to the form, but it was the final object that was diabolical.

Thus we also condemn the masses of our adversaries, not because it is simply evil in itself to use the Lord's Supper, for we also use it religiously, but because they add their impious opinions concerning the work itself (*opere operato*), and its efficacy for the living and the dead, &c. So also in baptism, we give nothing to the work itself, but we say, that faith is required whereby the grace which is offered in baptism may be received. And as David had his adversaries, who set themselves against him on account of this doctrine, so we also are compelled to bear the calumnies, the hatred, the excommunications, and other persecutions of adversaries on account of this doctrine.

Let therefore our theology upon this point remain firm and established; whereby we teach, that, in the matter of justification, when we are to raise up consciences and to speak of taking away sins, neither ceremonials nor morals are of any avail; because they were not instituted to the end that righteousness might come by them. As Paul saith in general, There is no law given which can give life; and therefore, righteousness cannot be by the law, Gal. iii. Here mercy alone avails, which God sets forth in the sacrifice of Christ; and faith, whereby that mercy, or that sacrifice of Christ, is apprehended. The ceremonies, therefore, both among us and under the law, were holy and excellent, but in their place. So also moral works are good, but in their place. But in the matter of justification, they are not

only useless, but altogether nothing ; because this matter belongs to the sacrifice of Christ : in comparison of the dignity of this, all the ceremonies of the law, all moral works, are nothing.

Thus also political righteousness, is, in its place, a most sweet and excellent thing ; in order that peace and mutual concord may subsist among men. But if thou wouldst wish to be righteous before God, because thou art a good citizen, a chaste husband, a just tradesman, &c. then, thou makest of a most sweet thing, an abomination which God cannot endure. Wherefore, let us first hold it fast that we are righteous, and remain heirs of eternal life, only by the mercy of God ; and afterwards, let us testify our obedience in a holy and blameless life ; which pertains, not unto our own righteousness, but unto the exercise of our graces, and unto that obedience which we owe to our God, as children in the house of our Father. Then it will come to pass, that as the sacrifices under the law were unto God a sweet-smelling savour, on account of the dependance of the persons on the mercy by which their person was justified ; so also our obedience and holy works will please God on account of our faith in Christ, as being in their proper place,—because they are not done for the attainment of righteousness, but as a testimony that we are grateful for being justified freely. For the tree must first be good, before any thing good can proceed from it ; as David afterwards with emphasis saith, “ Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness ; ” that is, when the walls of Jerusalem shall have been first built in this way. So also Samuel saith unto Saul, “ And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt be turned into another man,—and then whatsoever cometh into thine hand, do it,” 1 Sam. x. Here he sets before him, not one work only, but sends him, when changed by the Spirit, into the middle of a multitude of works ; because he is now made another man, and therefore other works follow.

This theology our adversaries do not understand,

but reverse the matter, and will and teach, that men should go on working until they are changed and become other men. Whereas, the man or the person must first be changed in the manner which the order of this Psalm sets forth; and afterwards it will come to pass, that all things will be done rightly, whether thou be circumcised, or sacrifice, or wash as under the law; or whether thou be without the law in the work of thy calling, or eat, or drink, or become a husband, &c. For all things please God, because the person now pleases him; not indeed on account of itself, but on account of the sacrifice of Christ, and the mercy which is apprehended by faith.

Here, therefore, is seen the reason why David condemns the sacrifices:—on account of the matter of justification, or the final object. For this object destroys not only ceremonial, but moral works, if it be not right. Wherefore, all the cavillations of the ignorant in spiritual things, are directed to interpret the works of the law in Paul, as signifying the ceremonial works. But the ceremonies under the law, were as holy and as necessary, as moral works are holy and necessary under the New Testament, as the third precept concerning the Sabbath plainly shews; which, although ceremonial, is placed before all morals. And even as we at this day are bound unto all public and domestic laws, and unto the law of brotherly love, so were they bound unto ceremonies. To say, therefore, that ceremonies are now dead and abolished, is nothing at all; for then they were not dead, and yet they did not justify; even as morals, or politicals, or that which belongs to the decalogue, does not justify us. It was necessary to make these remarks, on account of the calumnies with which even learned men load us.—I now return to the consolation.

It is, then, a matter most full of consolation, that God will not have sacrifices, but that he condemns and rejects even this exalted worship, because it may be done with a view to turn away the wrath of God, and that we might be thereby justified. Whereas, here is commended to us the mercy of God, freely forgiving our

sins and justifying us. For those who seek righteousness by their own works, do nothing else but endeavour to become their own makers or creators, contrary to that scripture, "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." For the first creation is when we are born into this world, but it is not our creation, it is the creation of God—and shall the second creation be ours, whereby we are born into eternal life? Therefore, it is not only a false but an impious opinion, to imagine, that God can be so appeased by our works, as to give us life eternal, or righteousness for them. And if he will not allow those works which he has himself commanded, to be done to this end, but rejects them, how much less will he accept those works which are of our own choosing; and which are done under an absurd superstition, without the command of God?

Wherefore this sentence must be carefully marked, wherein he speaks against Moses, against the law, and against all works and religions.—"Thou desirest not sacrifice:" that is, that the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ might be established. But this sentence does not seem to fight so much against the law, as against our own hearts. For we are all in that state by nature, that we want to be able to bring something unto God whereby he may be appeased; and we cannot with all our heart safely trust ourselves entirely to his mercy. Hence, under our evil deeds we are ever in desperation, and under our good deeds in presumption. But why do we presume upon those things which we receive from another, and which we do not possess as our own? For even our very confession, and our giving of thanks, are gifts which we receive elsewhere—how much more then must those be gifts for which we give thanks! In vain, therefore, is reconciliation attempted by works.—What then does God desire if he does not desire sacrifices?—

VERSE 18.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

This passage is worthy of being written in letters of gold. For here you see what a sacrifice he sets forth, in opposition to all the sacrifices of the law and of the whole world. But because the sacrifice is not without the feast, therefore he casts away the priesthood of the law also, and institutes a new priesthood with new sacrifices. First of all, then, let us here make the distinction;—that there are two priesthoods; the one which God rejects, the other which he approves. The priesthood which he reprobates, is that which has burnt-sacrifices and other sacrifices instituted under the law. The priesthood which he approves, is that under which are offered, not beasts, but contrite and humbled hearts. We must observe this distinction at the outset, and believe, that it is not made by David, but by the Holy Ghost himself. For it will presently be made to appear, that no greater consolation can be enjoyed, than by knowing, that it is declared by God himself, that he desires not the blood of bulls nor any other works of our hands; according to that word, “In vain do they worship me with the commandments of men;” and that, divine sacrifices, and those which are pleasing unto God, are a broken spirit and a contrite heart, Matt. xv. Isa. xxix.

Secondly: there is not only here made that distinction between the priesthood and sacrifices which is so intolerable to the Jews, but there is also set forth so blessed and sweet a representation of God, that you can not find one more so any where. Men describe God, speculatively, by certain similitudes;—that God is the centre, which is every where, and the sphere which is nowhere. But all this is mathematical and physical, which we leave to other professors. We are seeking the theological definition: that is, not a definition of the divine essence, which is incomprehensible, but of his will and affection,—what pleases him and what does not please

him. For that man does not know a prince who knows his power and his wealth, but he who understands the affections and all the counsels of the prince. So, there are before our eyes the creation of the world and the power of God ; but the chief thing of all is to know, the end for which, and the design with which, God made them. This knowledge the present verse of the Psalm sets forth with peculiar sweetness ;—that God is such a God, that he does nothing, finally, but respect and love the contrite, the afflicted, and the distressed ; and that, he is the God of the humble and the bruised. Whoso can embrace this definition in his mind, he is a theologian. For God cannot be apprehended in his majesty and power ; and therefore, this definition opens to us the will of God ;—that he is the God, not of death, but of life ; not of destruction, but of salvation ; not an enemy of the humble and the lost, but a lover and a helper ; and plainly, that he is the God of life, of salvation, of rest, of peace, of all consolation and joy !

Wherefore, the prophet consoles all the contrite, by saying, that there can be no sacrifice offered more pleasing unto God, than that we tremble and fear, and, in that fear, believe that God is favourable and appeased, &c. This is wisdom above all wisdom ; that is, divine wisdom. For reason or human sense argues thus ;—I feel that I have sinned ; and therefore, I am afflicted in my mind ; therefore, I have an angry God ; therefore, all grace is taken away from me. Thus does reason, and whatever is beneath Christ, argue. And then comes in Satan, and drives on the mind, already inclining thereto, unto desperation, either by alarming it with examples of divine wrath, or by setting before it those scriptures wherein Christ and the Holy Spirit desire to cast down hearts that are in security. By these things the evil is increased, and desperation gains, as it were, double strength. But what does the wisdom of the Holy Ghost teach us ? It sets before us, that God is not a God who desires to terrify more, those minds which are already terrified, or to bruise more, hearts that are already bruised ; but who loves those that are contrite,

licted, and humble ; and who waits for and hears the cries and groans of those who are in trouble.

But unless the holy Spirit diffuse this wisdom through our hearts, even though it be heard, it is heard to no purpose. For hearts cannot of themselves apprehend this spiritual wisdom, but on the contrary, when they are oppressed with bitterness and sorrow, they do not even dare to pray. And although I had not myself such experience of this peril, yet, I have learnt again and again, how difficult it is in this struggle to say—Lord, help me ! Because, hearts under a sense of the wrath of God, see nothing and know nothing, whereby they can console and raise themselves up ; so absorbed are they in despair.

Wherefore, I exhort and admonish you who are hereafter to be teachers in the church, that when minds are in extreme despair, ye teach them that they take courage and dare to hope ; because, it is written, that parts which are in this way bruised and humbled, are the most pleasing sacrifices unto God, which he prefers to all other worship. This is the worship that he waits to receive from all ; and in order to this worship, he sends pestilence, famine, the sword, and all perils ; that we, being afflicted, might hope for the divine help. For he permits that he may convert : whereas, we receive this permitting as a reason why we should turn away, and flee from him. He afflicts that we might say, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :” whereas, we, as when under the Pope, either run into monasteries, or seek other ways whereby we may make to ourselves a remedy. This is what Isaiah saith, “This people turneth not unto him that smiteth them.” Thus, universally, reason, destitute of the Word and Spirit of God, desires to flee from God ; as Peter did in the ship, when he tells Christ to depart, because he could not get away himself ; and if the ship had been near the shore, no doubt he would have jumped into the sea, Luke v. But as the Holy Spirit here teaches, that a heart thus contrite is a sacrifice acceptable unto God ; so, Christ there teaches Peter not to fear.

It is therefore quite manifest, that this theology of ours does not belong to the daring and secure : for such are altogether insensible, and neither see nor understand any thing of these spiritual things : and such also are all those who persecute this doctrine, as well teachers as magistrates and princes. But this theology belongs only to the comforting of the afflicted, miserable, and despairing. These languish and fall down because their minds are broken and bruised ; and therefore, they receive the physician Christ, teaching, that this disease is not unto death, but is a sacrifice most pleasing unto God. This is the medicine which heals those pains unspeakable : nor is there any other kind of remedy but this. The world however and our adversaries laugh at these things as absurdities, because they do not understand them. But it is not absurdity to the Holy Spirit, but the highest wisdom, that, in the time of despair we should the most hope in mercy, and on the other hand, in the time of presumption and security the most fear. This is the worship which the prophet prefers to sacrifices ; and by teaching invites us, when we would offer unto God the most acceptable sacrifice, not to prepare hecatombs, nor burnt-offerings, but to sing this song, “ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; ” that is, that we believe that our vexations and afflictions please God, and that we hope in his mercy.

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

He saith “ a broken and a contrite heart ; ” that is, a heart not feignedly, but truly, broken in pieces ; which, through desperation is, as it were, dying. Such an heart, saith he, thou dost not hate, (as we consider thou dost,) but acceptest with pleasure. We see, therefore, that our theology is the word of life and of righteousness ; because, it works and encourages against sin and death, and cannot be exercised but in sin, and in infirmity. It is also the word of gladness, whose power cannot be felt but under sorrow and affliction. But we are such, that

we want to have the word of life and gladness, and to do nothing to do with the temptations of death and sorrow. Excellent and noble theologians truly.

It must be learnt, therefore, that the Christian must be exercised in the midst of death, with the bites and stings of conscience, and between the teeth of the devil and of hell, and must yet hold fast the word of grace, as to say under such fears of conscience, Thou, O Lord, favourest me; because it is written, that no sacrifice is more pleasing unto God than a contrite heart, and no priesthood more acceptable than that by which broken hearts are offered up. The Pope, when he sacrifices with a pomp becoming kings, is detestable in the sight of God, and is an abomination in comparison of the sinner, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke xviii. Such an one is a true Pope, a true priest, and well-pleasing in the sight of God; for he offers the most acceptable sacrifice—a mind broken, and yet hoping in his mercy.

This description or definition of God, therefore,—not God, in his proper form, is such a God who loves the afflicted, who pities the broken, who pardons the fallen, and comforts the languid, is most full of consolation. Can there be a more sweet representation of God set forth? As, therefore, God is such an one really, we enjoy him as such, as far as we believe. Moreover, this verse plainly casts away all other kinds of worship, and all other works, and calls us to a trust in the mercy and goodness of God only;—that we believe that God favours us, even when we seem to ourselves to be deserted and wretched. Thus, when Nathan told David on his face, "Thou art that man of death," David was broken down, and prepared this sacrifice. And then, when he heard, "Thou shalt not die," he offered up this sacrifice. In the midst of wrath he conceived a hope of mercy, and under the very sense of death a hope of life. And it was from this experience, that the present verse had its birth; in which we are taught concerning the sacrifice acceptable unto God; which is in the midst of death and of the wrath of God, to hope for grace and

life. This theology is to be learnt by experience, but without experience it is not to be understood : that the poor in spirit might know, that they are then in grace when they feel the wrath of God the most : and that, the hope of mercy may be held fast in desperation, and the fear of God in security ; as it is said in another place, “ The Lord is well pleased with them that fear him, and with them that hope in his mercy,” Psalm cxlv. For according to this verse, God is defined to be nothing but mercy and favour ; that is, with respect to the broken and afflicted, &c.

But this passage must also be considered negatively. For, as it is a sacrifice well pleasing unto God, if, when in sorrow and broken, we hope in his mercy ; therefore, he forbids desperation, as being the greatest iniquity. For he wills, that tribulation should be endured in faith, and not that desperation should be added to it. For it is as great a sin to despair on account of our own unworthiness, as to presume on account of our own righteousness. The middle way must be held ; otherwise, we shall make, of the most acceptable sacrifice, the greatest abomination. Let the sacrifice remain a sacrifice, but let it not become a destruction ; for a destruction it is, to despair. Therefore, let each of us so bear the cross and afflictions, that we be not overcome with sorrows and fall into desperation. For this is to take away divinity from God, which he displays most of all in his mercy ; as the description of him given in this verse proves.— These things are said and taught daily ; but when we come to the practice of them, there are few who act up to them. For we ought even then to stand fast in mercy, when we seem to be overcome with anguish ; and to offer that sacrifice which the Holy Spirit presses so much upon us. And here is something even for the weak, if they do not quite leave their station. For no one is master of this exercise, but we all remain scholars ; as Paul also saith, “ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow on,” Phil. iii.

VERSE 19.

Do good, O Lord, in thy good pleasure unto Zion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built.

We have hitherto, throughout the whole Psalm, the articles of *justification* and *repentance*, with their following fruits, set forth with great fulness and with the most weighty words, both affirmative and negative. The affirmative words were, "Create in me a clean heart, O God;" for since he prays for a new creation, he clearly leaves nothing unto Free-will. The negative words were, "For thou desirest not sacrifice:" which signify, that we cannot arrive at the appeasing of the wrath of God and attending unto grace, by any of our own works; but must stand only in this,—that God is merciful.

The prophet now ceases from doctrine, and adds a prayer. As though he had said, I have hitherto shewn the way of justification, and what is true repentance, and the manner of the forgiveness of sins.. Now nothing remains, but that we pray, that this knowledge be diffused abroad among all the people, and be exercised. For false teachers will not be wanting, who will so preach the law and its sacrifices, that this part of doctrine concerning free mercy, will be utterly neglected. Wherefore there is need of prayer, that, against such, the true doctrine might be held fast among the people. For we are not to imagine that David prays for the temporal building, because, Jerusalem was then flourishing, and was then the most highly blessed both with laws and the greatest princes: and yet, David prays, that its walls might be built: not, however by builders who handle such materials as wood, stones, and mortar, but by the Lord. The walls were then standing, and yet he prays, that they might be built. Therefore, although he may mean Jerusalem then standing, yet he speaks of the allegorical Jerusalem, or uses the figure synecdoche, and when he mentions the name Jerusalem, means the people or the church throughout the whole city and

kingdom ; that, as the city was well fortified against the assault of enemies, so it might be fortified also in spirit against the power of the devil and all spiritual snares : seeing that, destroyers would not be wanting, who would drive men to do good according to the Decalogue, and teach nothing concerning a trust in mercy ; and that thus it would come to pass, that they would be drawn away into a trusting in their own righteousness. Against these (saith he) do thou build, that they may truly know and understand thee ; that is, that they may know, that they are righteous by thy grace and mercy only.

This is building the walls that they may be strong, when men learn in this way to trust in the mercy of God, and to receive grace. For those who have once begun, increase daily more and more. For in this knowledge, it is not enough to have begun ; because, as Satan, after the receiving of grace, rages against the godly with all his ministers both angelic and human, therefore, it is necessary to stand fast in the field of battle, and it is necessary that minds should be fortified and confirmed more and more ; that, as Satan does not cease from assaulting, so, he that keepeth Israel may not cease from defending and fortifying. This verse, therefore, contains a petition for the bestowing and preserving of grace. And here again, he ascribes all things to the goodness of God, and not to his own merits or endeavours : — that God would preserve this knowledge of grace according to his own good-will. And then, that he would also build the walls ; that is, that minds may be strong and well fortified with this knowledge, that in the time of battle, they may stand against the devil.—And, when the people are thus instructed, justified, preserved, and defended against all the errors and snares of Satan,—

VERSE 20.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering ; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

That is, then shall we praise those sacrifices which

we have before condemned, and they shall please thee. For you may rightly understand sacrifices in general, whether they be those which were offered according to the law, or spiritual sacrifices; for both are the sacrifices of righteousness, because they each rest wholly on the divine goodness and mercy. For when men thus trust in mercy, then, if a calf be offered, it is acceptable unto God, and is a sacrifice of righteousness; and if there be no calf, then the "calf of the lips" (as Hosea calls it) is acceptable; therefore, I understand sacrifices in general. They are called, moreover, "sacrifices of righteousness," not because they justify, (for the person is already righteous by faith or mercy,) but because they are offered by justified or righteous persons, or by righteousness itself. For when the people are righteous, and know that it is by grace alone that they please God, and not by any worthiness or merit of their own, then, whatever they do according to the word of God, is rightly called a sacrifice or a work of righteousness, even those works which are corporal. — If a man drink wine, he drinks the wine of righteousness; if he put on his coat, he puts on the coat of righteousness; when he governs his family, he governs the family of righteousness; if he wage war, if he govern the state, if he live, if he die, all those works are works of righteousness; because, the person is righteous. — In the same way understand the term "altar;" whether it be that which was at that time in the temple at Jerusalem, or the allegorical temple which exists at this day throughout the whole world.

The prophet therefore sets before us a twofold sacrifice. The first is, that which he called "a contrite heart;" that is, when a broken spirit is felt, and a humbled heart, which is struggling under thoughts upon the wrath and judgment of God. Here, see that thou add not desperation; but trust, and believe by hoping against hope; for Christ is the physician of the contrite, who desires to raise up the fallen, and not to quench the smoking flax, but to feed its fire. If therefore thou be smoking flax, do not extinguish thyself; that is, do not add desperation. If thou be a bruised reed, do not bruise

thyself more, or give thyself up to be bruised by Satan ; but give thyself up to Christ, who hath goodwill towards men, and loveth bruised and contrite spirits. This is the first and chiefest sacrifice.

And then, when thou knowest that God is the justifier of sinners, if thou give to the one God thanks, thou then addest another sacrifice ; that is, the sacrifice of return, or of gratitude for a gift received ; which sacrifice, is not merit, but confession, and a testification of grace, which thy God has given thee of mere mercy. Therefore, the whole burnt offerings under the law, which were offered by the saints and by the righteous, were offered, not to the end that they might by them be justified, but that they might testify, that they had received mercy and consolation. Thus a sacrificed bullock is a testifying of grace ; or, so to speak, a work-voice of gratitude, or a manual gratitude ; wherein, the hand utters gratitude as with vocal expressions.

This is another kind of sacrifice. The first sacrifice is a sacrifice of mortification, that we be neither puffed up in prosperity, nor sink into desperation in adversity ; but that we regulate security in the fear of God, and, under a sense of the wrath and judgment of God, hold fast our hope in mercy ; so that we neither dash our head against the heavens, nor our feet against the earth. The other kind of sacrifice is the exercise of our graces. This consists, not in our tongue only, in confessing our faith, or in preaching the name of the Lord, but in all the actions of life. And it is called the “sacrifice of righteousness,” because it therefore pleases God, because the person is righteous, and because that sacrifice of humiliation has preceded which holds the middle way between presumption and desperation.

This, however, is not a mathematical, but a physical, medium. For although it is impossible, under this our infirmity, so to live that we never should run aside either to the right hand or to the left ; yet, the endeavour is required, that, when we feel either security or desperation, we do not indulge, but resist them. For as when the mark is set before archers, some allowance is made

for them who do not altogether miss the mark, although they do not hit the very mathematical point or middle; so, it is enough with God, that we fight against security and pride of spirit, and also against desperation. And though there be something deficient in their joy under adversity, and in their fear under prosperity, yet that is not imputed unto the saints, for they have Christ as a mediator; through whom, it comes to pass, that they are considered as perfect saints, though they have scarcely the first-fruits of sanctification; for the tenths are in Christ, though they have hardly the first-fruits in themselves.

The sum therefore of the whole doctrine is this.— That the afflicted raise themselves up through the merit of Christ, or through the mercy of God; and that those who are without afflictions, walk in the fear of God, and cast away all security. Unto this doctrine, the prayer which this Psalm contains is necessary—that the Lord would build up his church: and then will follow the sacrifices which are well-pleasing and acceptable unto God. Which may our God and Redeemer Jesus Christ bestow upon us abundantly. Amen.

SELECTIONS

FROM

**THE PREFACE TO THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS,
THE COMMENTARY ON THE GALATIANS,
THE EPISTLE BY ST. PETER,**

AND OTHER WORKS,

OF

Martin Luther;

**ENDED TO GIVE, AT ONE VIEW, HIS DESCRIPTION OF
THE EXPERIENCE OF A CHILD OF GOD, AND OF SOUL-
JUSTIFYING AND DELIVERING FAITH.**

P R E F A C E

TO THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

As this Epistle of Paul to the Romans contains alone the plan of the whole scripture, and is a most complete epitome of the New Testament, or Gospel; which Gospel it exhibits, of itself, in the most brief and most clear manner; I consider it ought, not only to be imbibed by all Christians from their youth, and to be thoroughly understood to a word; but, to be, by unceasing and anxious meditation, pondered and digested, and cast down, like well-digested food, into the “lower parts of the belly.” For this epistle, is such a full treasury of spiritual riches, and as it were, such an overflowing cornucopiæ, that if you read it a thousand times over, there is always in it something new to be found, so that the last time of reading shall be ever the most profitable. Because, under the divine teaching, and under the growth in the knowledge of Christ, the nature of faith, (which is therein to be learnt and experienced in the workings of all its divine sensations with power,) carries you deeper and deeper into the subject; the faith grows as you proceed, and becomes, by its own increase, more strong, more sweet, more precious, and more enriched. I thought, therefore, I might render a profitable service, if I should spend upon it, (according to the measure of the gift which I have received of God,) a certain portion of labour; and, by this short preface, open a plain way for its being read and understood by my posterity, with more clearness, and with less offence. To which work I

feel myself more especially inclined, because I know that this epistle, which ought to be made the only test, and only plan, has been so obscured by the unprofitable comments and vain sophistries of so many, that its grand scope, though as plain as possible, has been understood but by few writers during many ages.

In the first place then, we must examine, and clearly understand, the nature of the terms and figures of speech used by the apostle. And above all, what he would have us to understand by these and the like terms—law, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, flesh, spirit. For, if we understand not what is meant by these, though we read never so diligently, it will be but labour in vain. The term law, is not here to be understood according to the manner of philosophy, or reason, as being a doctrine that teaches what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done. For all human laws are fulfilled by external works, even though those works be done contrary to the desire of the heart. But God, as being the searcher of hearts, judges according to the inward motions of the heart. Wherefore, the law of God requires the obedience of the heart and affections. Nor is it fulfilled by any external works, unless those works be done with all the willingness of the heart, and with the whole flow of the affections. And therefore, there is nothing that the law so vehemently arrests and condemns, as those specious and outside works: that is, hypocrisy, where there is falsehood and any deception designed in the heart. Hence, the prophet saith, “All men are liars,” Psalm cxvi. Therefore, nature cannot fulfil the law. For all men are by nature inclined to evil, and hate the law. And, wherever there is not a willing and happy inclination of the heart towards God and his law, there is sin, and the wrath of God; how many and great works soever you may do under such an hypocrisy.

After taking this view of the nature of the law, St. Paul, chap. ii. brings forward all the Jews as sinners and transgressors of the law, notwithstanding all their show of obedience to the law by their external works. “For (saith he) not the hearers of the law are just

before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." By which he means, that no one can fulfil the law by external works. For he saith to those external workers, "Thou sayest a man should not commit adultery, and thou committest adultery thyself. Therefore, wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou thyself doest the same things that thou judgest." As though he had said — thou, indeed, with a certain specious hypocrisy, walkest in the external works of the law, and judgest others who walk not so. Thou teachest others, and beholdest the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye. For, although, from the fear of punishment or the love of thyself, thou hast a show of obedience to the law, by thy external works, yet, thou doest all these things with an unwilling mind, with a reluctant heart, and without love and affection toward God and the law; and, in thine heart, thou wishest there were neither law nor lawgiver; and that thy desires were not thus restrained. Therefore, although thou hast a show of obedience to the law by these works, yet, in thy heart, thou hatest the law, and art at enmity against it.—The apostle speaks thus. What (saith he) is thy righteousness, if, whilst thou teachest others not to steal, thou thyself, in thy heart, lusteth after theft with a desire that would certainly break out, were it not for the fear of punishment? And we often see, in hypocrites of this kind, the open act, how long soever it may be dissembled, at last follow and break out. Wherefore, (saith he) "Thou that teachest another teachest thou not thyself?" that is, thou thyself knowest not what thou teachest: for thou thyself maintainest not, in thine heart, what the law requires—that it cannot be fulfilled without the affection of the heart. For, so far from the law being fulfilled and justifying by external works, it even causes sin to abound; as it is said in the fifth chapter. Therefore, the more you really understand the law, the less you love it: because the more it is found to require and demand that which is contrary to your desires and inclinations; that is, contrary to nature.

Wherefore, the apostle saith, chap. vii., "The law is spiritual." As though he had said, if the law had been carnal, or a moral doctrine only, it might have been fulfilled by external works. But since it is spiritual, that is, requiring the affection of the mind, and the obedience of the spirit, no one can fulfil it, unless, with a happy heart, an ardor of mind, and a full flow of affection, he do those things which the law commands. But, such a state of heart, such an ardor of mind, and such an affection, thou wilt never obtain by any powers, or merits of thine own, but only, by the inspiration and operation of the Holy Spirit. He also renews the man, and makes him spiritual: so that, being made spiritual, he might love the spiritual law, and that then he might fulfil it with a happy and willing heart, and might, from a certain holy impulse within, be moved to do freely, willingly, and happily, those things which the law commands. The truth, therefore, is this.—The law is spiritual: that is, the law is not fulfilled but by the Spirit, and the heart renewed by the Spirit. And wherever that Spirit and renewal of heart by the Spirit is not, so far from there being a fulfilling, there will be a soured opposition to, and hatred of the law, which is itself "holy and just and good."

Accustom thyself, therefore, to this phraseology and characteristic mode of expression of the apostle: because, "doing the works of the law," and "fulfilling the law" are two very different things. Doing the works of the law is when, without grace and without Spirit, we begin with zeal to work, and endeavour to fulfil the law by our own strength and free-will. And as, while we are in that state, there remains working in the heart a certain servile fear and soured hatred of the law, all such works are, undoubtedly, sins and vile breaches of the law, and displeasing in the sight of God; as the apostle shews, chap. iii., "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God."—Here, therefore, let us take occasion to observe, how glaringly those sophists and doctors of old taught, when they asserted, that we can by the deeds of the law make ourselves meet

to receive grace ! For, how can I prepare or make myself meet to receive grace by works which are done with a reluctant heart, and opposing affections ! How can that work be pleasing to God, which I do, not willingly, but with soured reluctance, and rooted hatred against the law !

But, to fulfil the law, is to do the things which the law commands with a joyful, glad, and free heart ; that is, spontaneously and willingly to live unto God, and do good works, as though there were no law at all. Such a freeness, gladness, willing inclination, and flowing affection, however, is in none, but by the life-giving Spirit, and his vital energy and moving impulse in the heart ; as is shewn chap. v. The Spirit is given only by faith in Jesus Christ ; as the apostle has said in the beginning of the Epistle. And this faith comes by the hearing of the Gospel, or word of God ; by which Christ is preached as having died, having been buried and being risen again, for us ; as he shews chapters iii, iv, and x. Therefore the whole of justification is of God. Faith and the Holy Spirit are of God, and not of us.

Hence faith alone justifies, and faith alone fulfils the law. For faith, through the merits of Christ, obtains the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit renews, gladdens, quickens, and kindles such an holy flame in the heart, that it does whatever the law requires. And hence, out of faith thus living within and effectually working, spontaneously flow good works indeed. This is the scope of the apostle in chap. iii. For having therein first utterly condemned all works of the law, lest he should seem to destroy and make void the law by the doctrine of faith, he anticipates the objection. "We do not (says he) make void the law through faith, but we establish the law : " that is, we teach how the law is, by believing or faith, fulfilled indeed.

We now proceed to see what we are to understand by the term Sin.—Sin, as read in the scriptures, signifies, not the outward act only, but all that innate spring-head and force of sin, unbelief ; or all that in-bred depravity, which we inherit from Adam, and by which we

are naturally drawn and forced into sin : in a word, the corrupt heart itself and the whole of our reason, together with its best and most exalted powers, by which we can do nothing but sin. For we are then said to sin, when by the depraved urging or impulse within, we are moved on, and impelled headlong into that which is evil : and no external sin can be committed, but where the man is first urged on by this innate force of depravity, and then driven headlong with all his desire, and, as it were, rolled and dragged away into sin. It is this depravity of heart, this innate propensity to evil, this vice in the grain, this unbelief, (the spring and fountain-head of all sins,) that the scripture and God mean when they speak of sin. And as it is faith alone that justifies, and faith alone that obtains and receives the Spirit and the power of fulfilling the law, and of doing good works indeed ; so, it is unbelief alone, that is the spring-head of sin, and that stirs up or inflames the flesh to sin and to evil works ; as it was in the cases of Adam and Eve in Paradise, Gen. iii.

Hence Christ in the Gospel makes unbelief the main sin. "The Spirit (says he) shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me," John xvi. Wherefore, works truly good, like good fruits, cannot proceed but from a good tree ; that is, from faith influencing and working in the heart. Bad works, cannot proceed but from a bad tree ; that is, from unbelief in the heart. Hence it is, that this depravity and unbelief in the heart, is called throughout the scriptures the head of the serpent and of the old dragon, which is to be bruised by the blessed seed of the woman, even Christ.

And now, these two terms Grace, and Gift, have this difference. Grace, is the favour, the mercy, the free good-will of God towards us. Gift, is the Holy Spirit itself, which he pours out into the hearts of those on whom he has mercy, and towards whom he has a favour ; as appears from chap. v., where the apostle distinguishes gift, from grace. And although we do not enjoy the fullness of the gift, or spirit now in this life, having the remnants of sin still within us which war against the Spirit,

as the apostle shews chap. vii., Gal. iii., and as in Gen. iii. the future war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is spoken of; yet, the blessedness of grace is, that the sin which remains in us is not imputed unto us, but we are accounted righteous before God. For the grace or favour of God toward us, is not in imperfect measure, as we have observed concerning the gift; but God accepts us with free good-will, and full favour, for Christ's sake, our Mediator; and because we have the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit. How much soever, therefore, the remnants of sin within us may turn and rage at times, we are, nevertheless, still accounted righteous before God; and the sin is not imputed unto us, by reason of our faith, which keeps up a continual resistance against the flesh.

Hereby, thou wilt now understand chap. vii; where the apostle, although already justified by the Spirit, still acknowledges himself a sinner; and yet, notwithstanding this, he saith chap. viii., "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Whoever of us, therefore, are justified by faith in Christ, are both sinners and righteous. Sinners, on account of the flesh not being completely mortified, and because, having the remnants of sin still within us, we attain not unto the fulness of the Spirit. Righteous, because we have the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit, and because, for Christ's sake, and our faith in him, God, having a paternal favour unto us, imputes not unto us the remnants of sin within us, nor judges it until sin shall be utterly destroyed and abolished by death.

Now let us see what we are to understand by Faith. —Faith is not a certain cold notion, or vague imagination of the human mind, which any one, hearing the Gospel-history, may vainly form and make out to himself: for some, when they hear faith so much preached, and see that they can themselves talk a great deal about faith and Christ, and yet do not find that they are, by this knowledge, nor by the addition of meditation, constrained to works and to follow after good works, fall at last into that impious error of denying that faith alone

justifies, and affirm that works are also required. These, when they hear the Gospel, form to themselves certain notions, and turn over in their minds some frigid cogitations concerning Christ, and then think that this vague dream of theirs, and these cold cogitations, are faith. And of such, these are the common sayings — ‘Well then (say they) if faith alone justifies, I hear the Gospel, I know the history concerning Christ, therefore I believe.’ But, as this is a mere cold notion and human cogitation which does not renew the heart nor have any effect upon it, no newness of life, no works of faith are seen to follow.

But true faith is the work of God in us, by which we are born again, and renewed of God and the Spirit of God, John iii. ; by which the old Adam is destroyed and we are wholly transformed in all things. As the apostle saith, by faith we are made new creatures in Christ, and the Holy Spirit becomes the life and governing law in our hearts. Faith works so effectually, is such a living spring and powerful energy in the heart, that it cannot remain inactive, but must break forth into works. Nor could he that has true faith sit down at ease, whether good works were commanded or not : even if there were no law, he would, by this impulse influencing and urging him in his heart, be carried forth into action, nor would he come short in any pious and Christian duty. Whereas he, who does not his works from this living and impelling affection of mind, is in unbelief, and a total stranger to faith : and there are many who dispute and argue much about faith in the schools, and yet, know not themselves “ what they say nor whereof they affirm.”

Faith, therefore, is a steady confidence in the mercy of God toward us, living in the heart, and there effectually working ; by which, we are enabled to cast ourselves wholly upon God, and to entrust ourselves unto him ; so that, supported by this confidence, we hesitate not to meet death a thousand times. This animating confidence in the mercy of God, gladdens, cheers, and enlarges the heart, and carries it forth in the softest and sweetest af-

actions towards him. It so strengthens the heart of him that believes, that, having this reliance on God, he fears not to stand alone in the face of the whole creation: such an intrepid boldness, such a supporting courage, does the Spirit of God received by faith, put into the heart. Upon this we follow on, and by this lively impulse in the heart, we are moved on to good. This gladdened inclination of heart we follow up, so as to find a spontaneous, willing, prompt, and glowing desire to do, to bear, to suffer all things in obedience to so merciful a God and Father, who, through Christ, has enriched us with such a fulness of grace, and overwhelmed us with such an abundance of riches. And it never can be, that this efficacy and life of faith can be in any one, without its causing him to continue in good works, and to bring forth fruit unto God; even as it is impossible that a funeral pile should be set on fire, and the flame of it not shine forth. Wherefore, in this important matter, take heed that thou trust not to the vain fancies and vague cogitations of thine own brain, or to the idle imaginations of the sophist. These sophists have neither heart nor understanding, but are beasts serving their own belly only, born for nothing else but the holiday-feasts of the schools. But pray thou unto God, who by his word commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that he would shine into thy heart and beget in thee faith; or thou wilt never in truth believe, even though thou shouldst, by such notional cogitations as these, strive after the attainment and possession of faith for a thousand years together.

This real faith is true righteousness, which the apostle calls the righteousness of God: that is, which avails and stands before God, because it is the pure gift of God. And this righteousness renews, and transforms the whole man, and renders him such, that, according to the common definition of righteousness, he "renders to every one his own." For when by this faith we are justified and brought to love the law of God, by thus magnifying God and his law, we render unto God the

honour due unto him. Moreover, when by this faith we believe that we are freely reconciled to God through Christ, who gave himself up entirely to become a servant unto our salvation, then also, in like manner, we are enabled to become servants unto our neighbour; and thus again we “render to every one of his own.” But unto this righteousness of the heart we shall never attain, by any strivings of our own free-will, or by any powers or merits of our own. For, as no one but God himself can implant in the heart that vital energy, faith, so no one can expel from himself that enmity, the unbelief of the heart; it is the work of the grace and Spirit of God only; so utterly impossible is it to deliver ourselves from one sin by our own powers. How specious a show soever, therefore, external works may carry with them, yet, whatever is not of faith is hypocrisy and sin.

And, finally, concerning the terms *Flesh* and *Spirit*, which so often occur in this epistle.—By *Flesh* you are not to understand, in the common sense of the term, desires and lusts only. Nor by *Spirit* are you to understand those things only that are carried on in the internal recesses of the mind and heart. According to the apostle, and Christ himself, John iii., you are to understand by *flesh* “whatsoever is born of the flesh:” that is, the whole man, his body, his soul, and his whole reason, together with all its greatest and best faculties: because all these faculties savour of nothing but *flesh* and seek nothing but what is carnal. You are to consider *flesh* whatever is without the Spirit of God, even though it be thinking or speaking of God, or faith, or any spiritual things. You are to call *flesh*, all works, how good and holy soever in appearance, that are done without the grace and motions of the Holy Spirit in the heart. This is clear from Gal. v., where ‘the apostle enumerates, among the fruits of the flesh, heresies, and divisions. And, Rom. viii. he saith, the law was weak through the flesh: which is to be understood, not of lust only, but of the whole enmity and depravity of nature; and, in one

word of unbelief, which is the grand secret spring of all sin, yea, the greatest of all sins.

On the contrary, by Spirit, you are to understand spiritual things, even external works, when they proceed from the spiritual man, or from the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit. That washing of the feet which Christ did before his disciples was Spirit, although an external work. The fishing of Peter was Spirit, to which he returned after he was justified by the Spirit.—Flesh, therefore, is whatever a man does seeking and savouring of carnal things. Spirit, is whatever a man does, either within or without, exercising faith and love, and seeking spiritual things.

Unless you understand all these terms, you will comprehend neither this Epistle of St. Paul, nor the other books of the holy scriptures. And therefore, what authors soever they may be who use these terms in any other sense, be thou in nothing moved with such authority of men, but shun them all as a contagious pestilence.

THE USE OF THE LAW.

GALATIANS iii. 19.

Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions.

As things are divers and distinct, so the uses of them are divers and distinct: therefore, they may not be confounded: for if they be, there must needs be a confusion of the things also. A woman may not wear a man's apparel, nor a man a woman's attire. Let a man do the works that belong to a man, and a woman the works that belong to a woman. Let every man do that which his vocation and office requireth. Let pastors and preachers teach the Word of God purely. Let magistrates govern their subjects, and let subjects obey their magistrates. Let every thing serve in his due place and

order. Let the sun shine by day, and the moon and stars by night. Let the sea give fishes; the earth grain; the woods wild beasts and trees, &c. In like manner let not the law usurp the office and use of another; that is to say of justification: but let it leave this only to grace, to the promise, and to faith. What is then the office of the law?—Transgressions. Or else (as he saith in another place,) “The law entered that sin should abound.” A goodly office forsooth! “The law (saith he) was added because of transgressions:” that is to say, it was added besides and after the promise, until Christ, the “seed,” should come unto whom it was promised.

OF THE DOUBLE USE OF THE LAW.

Here you must understand, that there is a double use of the law. One is *civil*. For God hath ordained civil laws, yea, all laws, to punish transgressions. Every law then is given to restrain sin. If it restrain sin, then, it maketh men righteous!—No! nothing less! For in that I do not kill, I do not commit adultery, I do not steal; or, in that I abstain from other sins, I do it not willingly, or for the love of virtue, but I fear the prison, the sword, and the hangman. These do bridle and restrain me that I sin not; as bonds and chains restrain a lion or a bear, that he tear and devour not every thing that he meeteth. Therefore, the restraining from sin is not righteousness, but rather, a signification of unrighteousness. For as a mad or wild beast is bound, lest he should destroy every thing that he meeteth; even so, the law doth bridle a mad and furious man, that he sin not after his own lust. This restraint sheweth plainly enough, that they which have need of the law (as all they have which are without Christ,) are not righteous; but rather, wicked and mad men; whom it is necessary by the bonds and prison of the law, so to bridle, that they sin not.—Therefore, the law justifieth not!

The first use then of the law is, to bridle the wicked. For the devil reigneth throughout the whole world, and enforceth men to all kinds of horrible wickedness. There-

fore, God hath ordained magistrates, parents, ministers, laws, bonds, and all civil ordinances, that if they can do no more, yet, at the least, they may bind the devil's hands, that he rage not in his bond slaves after his own lust. Like as therefore they that are possessed, in whom the devil mightily reigneth, are kept in bonds and chains lest they should hurt others; even so, in the world, which is possessed of the devil and carried headlong into all kinds of wickedness, the magistrate is present with his bonds and chains, that is to say, with his laws, binding his hands and feet, that he run not headlong into all kinds of mischief. And if he suffer not himself to be bridled after this sort, then he loseth his head. This civil restraint is very necessary and appointed of God; as well for public peace, as also for the preservation of all things; but especially, lest the course of the Gospel should be hindered by the tumults and seditions of wicked, outrageous, and proud men. But Paul entreateth not here of this *civil* use and office of the law. It is indeed very necessary, but it justifieth not. For as a possessed or a mad man is not therefore free from the snares of the devil, or well in his mind, because he hath his hands and his feet bound, and can do no hurt; even so, the world, although it be bridled by the law from outward wickedness and mischief, yet it is not therefore righteous, but still continueth wicked. Yea, this restraint sheweth plainly, that the world is wicked and outrageous, stirred up and enforced to all wickedness by his prince the devil: for otherwise, it need not to be bridled by laws that it should not sin.

Another use of the law is *divine* and *spiritual*: which, is, as Paul saith, to "increase transgressions;" that is to say, to reveal unto a man his sin, his blindness, his misery, his impiety, ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God, death, hell, and the judgment, and the deserved wrath of God. Of this use, the Apostle treateth notably in the seventh to the Romans. This is altogether unknown to hypocrites, to the Popish sophisters, and school-divines; and to all that walk in the opinion of

the righteousness of the law, or of their own righteousness. But, to the end that God might bridle and beat down this monster and this mad beast (I mean the presumption of man's righteousness and religion, which naturally maketh men proud, and puffeth them up in such sort that they think themselves thereby to please God highly), it behoved him to send some Hercules, which might set upon this monster with all force and courage, to overthrow him and utterly to destroy him: that is to say, he was constrained to give a law in Mount Sinai, with so great majesty, and with so terrible a show, that the whole multitude was astonished, *Exod. xix. and xx.*

This, as it is the proper and principal use of the law, so is it very profitable and also most necessary. For if any be not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the pharisee did which is mentioned in the Gospel, he would swear (because he is possessed with the devil,) that he is righteous; and therefore, he continueth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth of his good works and merits. Such a one, God cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but by the law. For that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell, and lightning of God's wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites. Wherefore, this is the proper and true use of the law—by lightning, by tempest, and by sound of the trumpet (as in Mount Sinai), to terrify; and, by thundering, to beat down and rend in pieces that beast, which is called the opinion of righteousness! Therefore, saith God by Jeremiah the prophet, “My word is a hammer breaking rocks.” For as long as the opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of his grace and mercy, and ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of the remission of sins through Christ cannot enter into the head of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savour.

thereof. For that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness wherewith the heart is environed, doth resist it.

As therefore, the opinion of righteousness is a great and horrible monster; a rebellious, obstinate, and stiff-necked beast; so, for the destroying and overthrowing thereof, God hath need of a mighty hammer, that is to say, the law; which then is in his proper use and office, when it accuseth and revealeth sins after this sort—Behold! thou hast transgressed all the commandments of God, &c.! And so, it striketh terror into the conscience, so that it feeleth God to be offended and angry indeed, and itself to be guilty of eternal death. Here the poor afflicted sinner feeleth the intolerable burthen of the law, and is beat down even to desperation; so that now, being oppressed with great anguish and terror, he desireth death, or else seeketh to destroy himself. Wherefore, the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind, and that terrible earthquake, rending the mountains and breaking the rocks; that is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elias, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and gracious wind, in which the Lord was. But it behoved, that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass, before the Lord should reveal himself in that gracious wind.

This terrible show and majesty, wherein God gave his law in Mount Sinai, did represent the use of the law. There was in the people of Israel which came out of Egypt, a singular holiness. They gloried and said, "We are the people of God; we will do all those things which the Lord our God hath commanded." Moreover, Moses did sanctify the people, and bade them wash their garments, refrain from their wives, and prepare themselves against the third day. There was not one of them but he was full of holiness. The third day, Moses bringeth the people out of their tents to the mountain unto the sight of the Lord, that they might hear his voice,

What followed then?—When the children of Israel did behold the horrible sight of the mount smoking and burning, the black clouds, and the lightnings flashing up and down in this horrible darkness, and heard the sound of the trumpet blowing long and waxing louder and louder; and moreover, when they heard the thunders and lightnings, they were afraid, and standing afar off, they said, ‘Moses, we will do all things willingly, so that the Lord speak not unto us, lest that we die, and this great fire consume us. Teach thou us, and we will hearken unto thee.’ I pray you what did their purifying, their holiness, their white garments, and refraining from their wives, profit them? Nothing at all! There was not one of them that could abide this presence of the Lord in his majesty and glory. But all being amazed and shaken with terror, fled back as if they had been driven by the devil. For God is a consuming fire; in whose sight, no flesh is able to stand.

The law of God, therefore, hath properly and peculiarly that office, which it had then in Mount Sinai when it was first given, and was first heard of them that were washed, righteous, purified, and chaste: and yet, notwithstanding, it brought that holy people into such a knowledge of their own misery, that they were thrown down even to death and desperation. No purity nor holiness could then help them; but there was in them such a feeling of their own uncleanness, unworthiness, and sin, and of the judgment and wrath of God, that they fled from the sight of the Lord, and could not abide to hear his voice. “What flesh was there ever (say they,) that heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and yet lived? This day have we seen that God talketh with man, and yet he liveth.” They speak now far otherwise than they did a little before, when they said, ‘We are the holy people of God, whom the Lord hath chosen for his own peculiar people before all nations upon the earth. We will do all things which the Lord hath spoken.’ So it happeneth at length to all justiciaries; who, being drunken with the opinion of their own righteousness, do think, when they are out

of temptation, that they are beloved of God, and that God regardeth their vows, their fastings, their prayers, and their will-works; and that, for the same he must give unto them a singular crown in heaven. But when that thundering, lightning, and fire, and that hammer which breaketh in pieces the rocks, that is to say, the law of God, cometh suddenly upon them, revealing unto them their sin, the wrath and judgment of God; then, the self-same thing happeneth unto them which happened to the Jews standing at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Here, I admonish all such as fear God, and especially all such as shall become teachers of others hereafter, that they diligently learn out of Paul to understand the true and proper use of the law; which, I fear, after our time, will be trodden under foot, and utterly abolished, by the enemies of the truth. For even now, whilst we are yet living, and employ all our diligence to set forth the office and use both of the Law and the Gospel, there be very few, yea, even among those which will be accounted Christians, and make a profession of the Gospel with us, that understand these things rightly and as they should do. What think ye then shall come to pass, when we are dead and gone? I speak nothing of the Anabaptists, of the new Arians, and such other vain spirits, who are no less ignorant of these matters than are the Papists, although they take never so much to the contrary. For they are revolted from the pure doctrine of the Gospel, to laws and traditions; and therefore, they teach not Christ. They brag and they swear, that they teach nothing else but the glory of Christ, and the salvation of their brethren; and that they teach the Word of God purely. But, in very deed, they corrupt it and wrest it to another sense; so that they make it to sound according to their own imagination. Therefore, under the name of Christ, they teach nothing else but their own dreams; and under the name of Gospel, ceremonies, and laws. They are like, therefore, unto themselves, and so they still continue; that is to say, monks, workers of the law, and teachers of cere-

monies; saving that, they devise new names and new works.

It is no small matter then to understand rightly what the law is, and what is the true use and office thereof. And forasmuch as we teach these things both diligently and faithfully, we do thereby plainly testify, that we reject not the law and works (as our adversaries do falsely accuse us), but we do altogether establish the law and require the works thereof: and we say, that the law is good and profitable, but in his own proper use: which is, first to bridle civil transgressions: and then, to reveal and to increase spiritual transgressions. Wherefore, the law is also a light which sheweth and revealeth, not the grace of God, nor righteousness and life, but sin and death, and the wrath and judgment of God. For as in the Mount Sinai the thundering and lightning, the thick and dark cloud, the hill smoking and flaming, and all that terrible show, did not rejoice nor quicken the children of Israel, but terrified and astonished them, and shewed how unable they were with all their purity and holiness to abide the majesty of God speaking to them out of the cloud; even so, the law, when it is in his true use, doth nothing else but reveal sin, engender wrath, and accuse and terrify men; so that it bringeth them to the very brink of desperation. This is the proper use of the law, and here it hath an end, and it ought to go no farther.

Contrariwise, the Gospel, is a light which lighteneth, quickeneth, comforteth, and raiseth up fearful consciences. For it sheweth, that God, for Christ's sake, is merciful unto sinners, yea, and to such as are most unworthy, if they believe, that by his death, they are delivered from the curse; that is to say, from sin and everlasting death; and that, through his victory, the blessing is freely given unto them; that is to say, grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and everlasting life! Thus, putting a difference between the Law and the Gospel, we give to them both their own proper use and office. Of this difference between the Law and the Gospel,

There is nothing to be found in the books of the monks, canonists, schoolmen, no, nor in the books of the ancient Fathers. Augustine did somewhat understand this difference, and shewed it. Jerom, and others, knew it not. Briefly, there was wonderful silence many years, touching this difference, in all schools and churches. And this brought men's consciences into great danger. For unless the Gospel be plainly discerned from the Law, the true Christian doctrine cannot be kept sound and uncorrupt. Contrariwise, if this difference be well known, then is also the true manner of justification known; and then, it is an easy matter to discern faith from works, and Christ from Moses and all political works. For all things, without Christ, are the ministers of death for the punishing of the wicked. Therefore, Paul answereth to this question after this manner.

VERSE 19.

The Law was added because of transgressions.

That is to say, that the transgressions might increase and be more known and seen. And indeed so it cometh to pass. For when sin, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and hell, are revealed to a man through the Law, it is impossible but that he should become impatient, and murmur against God and despise his will. For he cannot bear the judgment of God and his own death and damnation; and yet, notwithstanding, he cannot escape them. Here, he must needs fall into hatred of God, and blasphemy against God. Before, when he was out of temptation, he was a very holy man; he worshipped and praised God; he bowed his knee before God, and gave him thanks, as the pharisee did, Luke viii. But now, when sin and death is revealed unto him, he wisheth that there were no God. The law, therefore, of itself bringeth a special hatred of God. And thus, sin is not only revealed and known by the Law, but also, is increased and stirred up by the Law. Therefore, Paul saith, Rom. vii. "Sin, that it might appear in, wrought death in me by that which was good; that

sin might be out of measure sinful by the commandment." There he treateth of this effect of the law very largely.

Paul answereth therefore to this question. If the law do not justify, to what end doth it serve? Although, saith he, it justify not, yet it is very profitable and necessary. For first, it civilly restraineth such as are carnal, rebellious, and obstinate. Moreover, it is a glass that sheweth unto a man himself: that he is a sinner guilty of death, and worthy of God's everlasting wrath and indignation. To what end serveth this humbling, this bruising and beating down by this hammer, (the law I mean)? To this end, that we may have an entrance into grace. So then, the law is a minister that prepareth the way unto grace. For God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the desperate; and of those that are brought even to nothing. And his nature is, to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to give sight to the blind, to comfort the miserable, the afflicted, the bruised and broken-hearted, to justify sinners, to quicken the dead, and to save the very desperate and damned. For he is an almighty Creator, making all things of nothing. Now, that pernicious and pestilent opinion of man's own righteousness, which will not be a sinner unclean, miserable, and damnable, but righteous and holy, suffereth not God to come to his own natural and proper work. Therefore, God must needs take his maul in hand, (the law I mean), to drive down, to beat in pieces, and to bring to nothing, this beast with her vain confidence, wisdom, righteousness, and power: that she may so learn at the length her own misery and mischief, and that she is utterly forlorn, lost, and damned. Here now, when the conscience is thus terrified with the law, then cometh the doctrine of the Gospel and grace, which raiseth up and comforteth the same again, saying, 'Christ came into the world, not to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax, but to preach the Gospel of glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken and contrite in heart, to preach forgiveness of sins to the captives,' &c.

But here lieth all the difficulty of this matter:—that,

When the man is terrified and cast down, he may be able to raise up himself again, and say, 'Now I am bruised and afflicted enough: the time of the law hath tormented and vexed me enough: now is the time of grace: now is the time to hear Christ, out of whose mouth proceeded the words of grace and life. Now is the time to see, not the smoking and burning Mount Sinai, but the Mount Moriah, where is the throne, the temple, the mercy-seat of God; that is to say, Christ, who is the King of righteousness and peace. There will I hearken what the Lord speaketh unto me, who speaketh nothing else but peace unto his people.'

Nay, the foolishness of man's heart is so great, that, in this conflict of conscience, when the law hath done his office and exercised his true ministry, he doth not only not lay hold upon the doctrine of grace, which promiseth most assuredly the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, but seeketh and procureth to himself more laws to satisfy and quiet his conscience. 'If I live (saith he) I will amend my life. I will do this, I will do that.' Here, except thou do quite the contrary; that is to say, except thou send Moses away with his law to those that are secure, proud, and obstinate, and, in these terrors, and in this anguish, lay hold upon Christ who was crucified and died for thy sins, look for no salvation!

So the law by his office helpeth, by occasion, to justification; in that it driveth a man to the promise of grace, and maketh the law sweet and comfortable unto him. Wherefore we do not abrogate the law, but we shew the true office and use of the law; to wit, that it is a true and profitable minister, which driveth a man to Christ. Therefore, after that the law hath humbled thee, terrified thee, and utterly beaten thee down, so that now thou art at the very brink of desperation, see that thou learn how to use the law rightly. For the office and use of it is, not only to reveal sin and the wrath of God, but also, to drive men unto Christ. This use of the law, the Holy Ghost only setteth forth in the Gospel; where he witnesseth, that God is present unto the afflicted and broken-hearted. Wherefore, if thou be bruised with this

hammer, use not this bruising perversely, so that thou load thyself with more laws, but hear Christ, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." When the law so oppressed thee that all things seem to be utterly desperate, and thereby driveth thee unto Christ to seek help and succour at his hands, then is the law in his true use: and, through the Gospel, it helpeth to justification. And this is the best and most proper use of the law.

Wherefore, Paul here beginneth afresh to treat of the law, and defineth what it is, taking occasion of that which he said before; to wit, that the law justifieth not. For reason, hearing this, by and by doth thus infer:—Then God gave the law in vain. It was necessary, therefore, to seek how to define the law truly, and to shew what the law is, and how it ought to be understood; that it be not taken more largely, or more straitly, than it should be. 'There is no law (saith he,) that is of itself necessary unto justification.' Therefore, when we reason as touching righteousness, life, and everlasting salvation, the law must be utterly removed out of our sight, as if it had never been or never should be, but as though it were nothing at all. For, in the matter of justification, no man can remove the law far enough out of his sight, or behold the only promise of God as he should do. Therefore, I said before, that the law and the promise must be separate far asunder as touching the inward affections and inward man, albeit indeed they are nearly joined together.

THE PRISON OF THE LAW.

GALATIANS iii. 23.

But before faith came, we were under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

THIS is to say, that before the time of the Gospel and grace came, the office of the law was, that we should be shut and kept under the same, as it were, in prison. This is a goodly and a fit similitude, shewing

the effect of the law, and how righteous it maketh men; therefore, it is diligently to be weighed. No thief, no murderer, no adulterer or other malefactor loveth the chains and fetters, and the dark and loathsome prison wherein he lieth fast bound; but rather, if he could, he would beat and break into powder the prison with his irons and fetters. Indeed, while he is in prison, he refraineth from doing evil; but not of a good will, or for righteousness sake, but because the prison restraineth him that he cannot do it. And now, being fast fettered, he hateth not his theft and his murder, (yea, he is sorry with all his heart that he cannot rob and steal, cut and slay,) but he hateth the prison; and if he should escape, he would rob and kill as he did before.

THE LAW SHUTTETH MEN UNDER SIN TWO WAYS,
CIVILLY AND SPIRITUALLY.

Such is the force of the law, and the righteousness that cometh of the law; compelling us to be outwardly good, when it threateneth death or any other punishment to the transgressors thereof. Here we obey the law indeed, but for fear of punishment; that is unwillingly, and with great indignation. But what righteousness is this, when we abstain from evil for fear of punishment? Wherefore, this righteousness of works is indeed nothing else but to love sin and to hate righteousness; to detest God with his law, and to love and reverence that which is most horrible and abominable. For look how heartily the thief loveth the prison and hateth his theft: so gladly do we obey the law in accomplishing that which it commandeth, and avoiding that which it forbiddeth.

Notwithstanding, this fruit and this profit the law bringeth, although men's hearts remain never so wicked,—that first, *outwardly* and *civilly*, after a sort, it restraineth thieves, murderers, and other malefactors. For if they did not see and understand that sin is punished in this life by imprisonment, by the gallows, by the sword, and such-like; and, after this life, with eternal damnation and hell-fire; no magistrate should be able to bridle the fury and rage of men by any laws, bonds,

or chains. But the threatenings of the law strike a terror into the hearts of the wicked, whereby they are bridled, after a sort, that they run not headlong, as otherwise they would do, into all kinds of wickedness. Notwithstanding, they would rather that there were no law, no punishment, no hell; and finally, no God. If God had no hell, or did not punish the wicked, he should be loved and praised of all men. But because he punisheth the wicked, and all are wicked; therefore, inasmuch as they are shut under the law, they can do no otherwise but mortally hate and blaspheme God.

Furthermore, the law shutteth men under sin, not only civilly, but also *spiritually*; that is to say, the law is also a spiritual prison, and a very hell. For when it revealeth sin, and threateneth death and the eternal judgment of God, a man cannot avoid it, nor find any comfort. For it is not in the power of man to shake off these horrible terrors which the law stirreth up in the conscience, or any other anguish or bitterness of spirit. Hereof come these lamentable complaints of saints which are every where in the Psalms: "In hell who shall confess thee?" &c. Ps. vi. 5. For then is a man shut up in prison; out of which he cannot escape, nor seeth how he may be delivered out of these bonds; that is to say, these terrible terrors.

Thus, the law is a prison both civilly and spiritually. For first, it restraineth and shutteth up the wicked, that they run not headlong according to their own lust into all kinds of mischief. Again, it sheweth unto us, spiritually, our sin, and terrifieth and humbleth us; that when we are so terrified and humbled, we may learn to know our own misery and condemnation. And this is the true and the proper use of the law, so that it be not perpetual. For this shutting and holding under the law, must endure no longer but until the faith come; and when faith cometh, then must this spiritual prison have his end.

Here again we see, that although the law and the gospel be separate far asunder, yet, as touching the inward affections, they are very nearly joined the one

with the other. This Paul sheweth when he saith, “ we were kept under the law, and shut up unto the faith which should be revealed unto us.” Wherefore it is not enough that we are shut under the law ; for if nothing else should follow, we should be driven to desperation, and die in our sins. But Paul addeth, moreover, that we are shut up, and kept under a schoolmaster (which is the law,) not for ever, but to bring us unto Christ, who is the end of the law. Therefore, this terrifying, this humbling, and this shutting up, must not always continue, but only until faith be revealed ; that is, it shall so long continue as shall be for our profit and our salvation : so that when we are cast down and humbled by the law, then grace, remission of sins, deliverance from the law, sin, and death, may become sweet unto us : which are not obtained by works, but are received by faith alone.

He which, in time of temptation, can join these two things together, so repugnant and contrary ; that is to say, which, when he is thoroughly terrified and cast down by the law, doth know that the end of the law and the beginning of grace, or of faith to be revealed, is now come, useth the law rightly. All the wicked are utterly ignorant of this knowledge, and this cunning. Cain knew it not, when he was shut up in the law ; that is, he felt no terror, although he had now killed his brother ; but dissembled the matter craftily, and thought that God was ignorant thereof. “ Am I my brother’s keeper ? ” saith he. But when he heard this word, “ What hast thou done ? Behold the voice of the blood of thy brother crieth unto me from the earth,” (Gen. iv. 9,) he began to feel this prison indeed. What did he then ? He remained still shut up in prison. He joined not the Gospel with the law, but said, “ My punishment is greater than I can bear,” verse 13. He only respected the prison, not considering that his sin was revealed unto him for this end, that he should fly unto God for mercy and pardon. Therefore, he despaired and denied God. He believed not that he was shut up to this end, that grace and faith might be revealed unto

or chains. But the threatenings of the terror into the hearts of the wicked, who bridled, after a sort, that they run not otherwise they would do, into all kind. Notwithstanding, they would rather law, no punishment, no hell; and God had no hell, or did not punish, be loved and praised of all men punisheth the wicked, and all as much as they are shut under otherwise but mortally hate.

Furthermore, the law only civilly, but also spiritual is also a spiritual prison, revealeth sin, and judgment of God, comfort. For it is these horrible torments

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For it is written, " that we are shut up, unto a prison

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not to thy destruction, but that thou mayest

be quickened by the blessed seed. Thou art killed by the

that, through Christ, thou mayest be quickened

and restored to life. Despair not therefore,

Saul, and Judas did; who, being thus shut up,

asked no farther but to their dark prison, and th

him : but only, that he should still remain in the prison of the law.

These words, “ to be kept under, and to be shut up,” are not vain and unprofitable, but most true and of great importance. This keeping under, and this prison, signifieth the true and spiritual terror, whereby the conscience is so shut up, that, in the wide world, it can find no place where it may be in safety. Yea, as long as these terrors endure, the conscience feeleth such anguish and sorrow, that it thinketh heaven and earth, yea, if they were ten times more wide and large than they are, to be straiter and narrower than a mouse-hole. Here is a man utterly destitute of all wisdom, strength, righteousness, counsel, and succour. For the conscience is a marvellous tender thing, and therefore when it is so shut up under the prison of the law, it seeth no way how to get out ; and this straitness seemeth only so to increase, as though it would never have an end. For then doth it feel the wrath of God, which is infinite and inestimable, whose hand it cannot escape, as the 139th Psalm witnesseth : “ Whither shall I fly from thy presence,” &c. Like as therefore this worldly prison, or shutting up, is a bodily affliction, and he that is so shut up can have no use of his body ; even so, the trouble and anguish of mind is a spiritual prison, and he that is shut up in this prison, cannot enjoy the quietness of heart, and peace of conscience. And yet, it is not so for ever, (as reason judgeth when it feeleth this prison) but until faith be revealed. The silly conscience, therefore, must be raised up, and comforted after this sort. ‘ Brother, thou art indeed shut up ; but persuade thyself that this is not done to the end that thou shouldest remain in this prison for ever.’ For it is written, “ that we are shut up, unto the faith which shall be revealed.” Thou art then afflicted in this prison, not to thy destruction, but that thou mayest be refreshed by the blessed seed. Thou art killed by the law, that, through Christ, thou mayest be quickened again and restored to life. Despair not therefore, as Cain, Saul, and Judas did ; who, being thus shut up, looked no farther but to their dark prison, and there

still remained : therefore they despaired. But thou must take another way in these terrors of conscience than they did ; that is, thou must know that it is well done, and good for thee to be so shut up, confounded, and brought to nothing. Use, therefore, this shutting up rightly, as thou shouldest do ; that is, to the end that when the law hath done his office, faith may be revealed. For God doth not therefore afflict thee, that thou shouldest still remain in this affliction. He will not kill thee that thou shouldest abide in death. “ I will not the death of a sinner, &c.” (saith he by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 11 ;) but he will afflict thee, that so thou mayest be humbled, and know that thou hast need of mercy, and the benefit of Christ.

This holding in prison, then, under the law, must not always endure, but must only continue to the coming or revealing of faith ; which this sweet verse of the Psalm doth teach us ; “ the Lord delighteth in those that fear him : ” (Psalm cxlvii. 11,) that is to say, which are in prison under the law. But by-and-by after he addeth, “ and in those that attend upon his mercy.” Therefore, we must join these two things together ; which, indeed, are as contrary the one to the other as may be. For what can be more contrary, than to hate and abhor the wrath of God ; and again, to trust in his goodness and mercy. The one is hell, the other is heaven : and yet, they must be nearly joined together in the heart. By speculation and naked knowledge, a man may easily join them together ; but by experience and inward practice so to do, of all things it is the hardest ; which I myself have often proved by my own experience. Of this matter the papists and sectaries know nothing at all. Therefore, these words of Paul are to them obscure and altogether unknown ; and when the law revealeth unto them their sin, and accuseth and terrifieth them, they can find no council, no rest, no help, no succour ; but fall to desperation, as Cain and Saul did.

Seeing the law, therefore (as it is said) is our tormentor and our prison, certain it is that we cannot love it, but hate it. He therefore that saith he loveth the law,

is a liar, and knoweth not what he saith. A thief and a robber should shew himself stark mad, that would love the prison, the fetters, and chains. Seeing then the law shutteth us up, and holdeth us in prison, it cannot be, but we must needs be extreme enemies to the law. To conclude, so well we love the law and the righteousness thereof, as a murderer loveth the dark prison, the strait bonds, and irons. How then should the law justify us!

VERSE 23.

And shut up unto the faith which should after be revealed.

This Paul speaketh, in respect of the fulness of the time wherein Christ came. But we must apply it not only to that time, but also to the inward man. For that which is done as an history, and according to the time wherein Christ came, abolishing the law and bringing liberty and eternal life to light, is always done, spiritually, in every Christian: in whom is found, continually, somewhile the time of the law, and somewhile the time of grace. For the Christian man hath a body, in whose members (as Paul saith in another place) sin dwelleth and warreth. Now, I understand sin to be, not only the deed or the work, but also the root and the tree, together with the fruits (as the scripture useth to speak of sin.) Which is yet, not only rooted in the baptised flesh of every Christian, but also is at deadly war within it, and holdeth it captive: if not to give consent unto it, or to accomplish the work, yet doth it force him mightily thereunto. For albeit a Christian man do not fall into outward and gross sins, as murder, adultery, theft, and such like; yet, he is not free from impatiency, murmurings, halting, and blaspheming of God; which sins, to reason and the carnal man, are altogether unknown. These things constrain him, yea, sore against his will, to detest the law; they compel him to fly from the presence of God; they compel him to hate and blaspheme God. For, as carnal lust is strong in a young man, in a man of full age the desire and love of glory, and in an

old man covetousness; even so, in a holy and faithful man, impatience, murmuring, hatred and blasphemy against God, do mightily prevail. Examples hereof there are many in the Psalms, in Job, in Jeremy, and throughout the whole scripture. Paul, therefore, describing and setting forth this spiritual warfare, useth very vehement words, and fit for the purpose; as of fighting, rebelling, holding and leading captive, &c.

Both these times then (of the law and gospel I mean) are in a Christian, as touching the affections and inward man. The time of the law, is, when the law exerciseth me, tormenteth me with heaviness of heart, oppresseth me, bringeth me to the knowledge of sin, and increaseth the same. Here the law is in his true and perfect work, which a Christian oftentimes feeleth as long as he liveth. So there was given unto Paul a prick in the flesh; that is, "the angel of Satan to buffet him," (2 Cor. xii. 7.) He would gladly have felt every moment the joy of conscience, the laughter of the heart, and the sweet taste of eternal life. Again, he would gladly have been delivered from all trouble and anguish of spirit; and therefore, he desired that this temptation might be taken from him. Notwithstanding, this was not done, but the Lord said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect through weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) This battle doth every Christian feel. To speak of myself, there are many hours in the which I chide and contend with God, and impatiently resist him. The wrath and judgment of God displeaseth me; and again, my impatience, my murmuring, and such like sins do displease him. And this is the time of the law; under which, a Christian man continually liveth, as touching the flesh. "For the flesh lusteth continually against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," (Gal. v. 17,) but in some more, and in some less.

The time of grace is, when the heart is raised up again by the promise of the free mercy of God, and saith, "Why art thou heavy, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me?" (Psalm xlii. 5, 11.) Dost thou see nothing but the law, sin, terror, heaviness, desperation,

death, hell, and the devil? Is there not also grace, remission of sins, righteousness, consolation, joy, peace, life, heaven, Christ and God? Trouble me no more, O my soul. What is the law, what is sin, what are all evils, in comparison of these things? Trust in God who hath not spared his own dear Son, but hath given him to the death of the cross for thy sins. This is then to be shut up under the law after the flesh; not for ever, but till Christ be revealed. Therefore, when thou art beaten down, tormented and afflicted by the law, then say, Lady Law, thou art not alone, neither art thou all things; but besides thee, there are yet other things, much greater and better than thou art; namely, grace, faith, and blessing. This grace, this faith, and this blessing do not accuse me, terrify me, condemn me; but they comfort me, they bid me trust in the Lord, and promise unto me victory and salvation in Christ. There is no cause therefore why I should despair.

He that is skilful in this art and this cunning, may indeed be called a right divine. The fantastical spirits and their disciples, at this day, which continually brag of the spirit, do persuade themselves that they are very expert and cunning therein. But I, and such as I am, have scarcely learned the first principles thereof. It is learned, indeed, but as long as the flesh and sin do endure, it can never be perfectly learned, as it should be. So then a Christian is divided into two times: In that he is flesh, he is under the law; in that he is spirit, he is under grace. Concupiscence, covetousness, ambition, and pride, do always cleave to the flesh; also ignorance, contempt of God, impatiency, murmuring and grudging against God, because he hindereth and breaketh off our counsels, our devices and enterprises; and because he speedily punisheth not such as are wicked, rebellious, and contemptuous persons, &c. Such manner of sins are rooted in the flesh of the faithful. Wherefore, if thou behold nothing but the flesh, thou shalt abide always under the time of the law. But these days must be shortened, or else no flesh should be saved. The law must have his time appointed, wherein it must have his

end. The time of the law, therefore, is not perpetual, but hath his end ; which end, is Jesus Christ. But the time of grace is eternal. For “ Christ being once dead dieth no more,” (Rom. vi. 9.) He is eternal : therefore, the time also of grace is eternal.

Such notable sentences in Paul, we may not lightly pass over, as the Papists and sectaries are wont to do. For they contain words of life, which do wonderfully comfort and confirm afflicted consciences ; and they which know and understand them well, can judge of faith ; they can discern a true fear from a false fear ; and they can judge of all inward affections of the heart, and discern all spirits. The fear of God is an holy and a precious thing, but it must not always continue. Indeed, it ought always to be in a Christian, because sin is always in him ; but it must not be alone, for then it is the fear of Cain, Saul, and Judas ; that is to say, a servile and a desperate fear. A Christian, therefore, must vanquish fear by faith in the word of grace. He must turn away his eyes from the time of the law, and look unto Christ, and unto the faith which is to be revealed. Here beginneth fear to be sweet unto us, and maketh us to delight in God. For if a man do only behold the law and sin, setting faith aside, he shall never be able to put away fear ; but shall at length fall to desperation.

Thus doth Paul very well distinguish the time of the law and grace. Let us also learn rightly to distinguish them both ; not in words, but in the inward affection, which is a very hard matter. For albeit these two things are separate far asunder, yet they are most nearly joined together in one heart. Nothing is joined more nearly together than fear and trust, than the law and the gospel, than sin and grace. For they are so united together, that the one is swallowed up of the other. Wherefore there is no conjunction like unto this.

At this place, “ Wherefore then serveth the law,” Paul began to dispute of the law, and also of the use and abuse thereof ; taking occasion of that which before he had affirmed,—that the faithful do obtain righteousness by grace only, and by the promise, and not by the law.

Upon that disputation rose this question, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” For reason, hearing that righteousness, or the blessing, is obtained by grace, and by the promise, by-and-by inferreth,—then the law profiteth nothing. Wherefore, the doctrine of the law must be diligently considered; that we may know, what and how we ought to judge thereof; lest that, either we reject the same altogether, as the fantastical spirits do, (which in the year a thousand five hundred and twenty-five, stirring up the rustical people to sedition, said, that the liberty of the Gospel giveth freedom to all men from all manner of laws;) or else, lest we should attribute the force of justification to the law. For both sorts do offend against the law; the one on the right hand, which will be justified by the law, and the other on the left hand, which will be clean delivered from the law. We must therefore keep the highway, so that we neither reject the law, nor attribute more unto it than we ought to do.

That which I have before so often repeated concerning both the uses of the law, namely, the civil and the spiritual use, do sufficiently declare, that the law is not given for the righteous; but, (as Paul saith in another place,) for the unrighteous and rebellious. Now, of the unrighteous, there are two sorts; that is to say, they which are to be justified, and they which are not to be justified. They which are not to be justified, must be bridled by the civil use of the law: for they must be bound with the bonds of the law, as savage and untamed beasts are bound with cords and chains. This use of the law hath no end; and of this Paul here speaketh nothing. But they that are to be justified, are exercised with the spiritual use of the law for a time, for it doth not always continue as the civil use of the law doth, but it looketh to faith which is to be revealed; and when Christ cometh, it shall have its end. Hereby we may plainly see, that all the sentences wherein Paul treateth of the spiritual use of the law, must be understood of those which are to be justified, and not of those which are justified already. For they which are justified already, inasmuch as they abide in Christ, are far above

all law. The law then must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith come. Not that they attain this righteousness through the law, (for that were not to use the law rightly, but to abuse it;) but that, when they are cast down and humbled by the law, they should fly unto Christ, "who is the end of the law to righteousness, to every one that believeth," (Rom. x. 4.)

Now, the abusers of the law, are, first of all, the justiciaries and hypocrites, which dream that men are justified by the law. For that use of the law, doth not exercise and drive a man to faith which is to be revealed, but it maketh careless, arrogant hypocrites, swelling and presuming of the righteousness of the law, and hindereth the righteousness of faith. Secondly, they abuse the law, which will utterly exempt a Christian man from the law; as the brain-sick Anabaptists went about to do, which was the occasion that they raised up that sedition of the rustical people. Of this sort, there are very many also at this day which profess the Gospel with us; who, being delivered from the tyranny of the Pope by the doctrine of the Gospel, do dream, that the Christian liberty is a dissolute and a carnal liberty to do whatsoever they list. These (as Peter saith, 1 Epist. ii. 16,) have the liberty of the Spirit as a cloak of maliciousness, through which the name of God and the Gospel of Christ is slandered every where; and therefore, they shall once suffer worthy punishment for this their ungodliness. Thirdly, such do also abuse the law, who, feeling the terrors thereof, do not understand that such terrors ought no longer to continue but unto Christ. This abuse in them is the cause that they fall to desperation: as, in the hypocrites, it is the cause of arrogancy and presumption.

Contrariwise, the true use of the law can never be esteemed and magnified as it is worthy, namely, that when the conscience, shut up under the law, despaireth not; but, being instructed by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, concludeth with itself after this sort; 'I am in-

deed shut up as a prisoner under the law, but not for ever; yea, this shutting up shall turn to my great profit. How so? because that I being thus shut up, shall be driven to sigh and seek the hand of an helper,' &c. After this manner the law is an inforcer, which by compulsion, bringeth the hungry unto Christ, that he may satisfy them with his good things. Wherefore, the true office of the law is to shew unto us our sins, to make us guilty, to humble us, to kill us, and to bring us down to hell, and finally to take from us all help, all succour, all comfort: but yet, altogether to this end,—that we may be justified, exalted, quickened to life, carried up unto heaven, and obtain all good things. Therefore, it doth not only kill, but it killeth that we may live.

THE SCHOOL OF THE LAW.

VERSE 24.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Here again he joineth the law and the Gospel together, (which are separate so far asunder,) as touching the affections and inward man, when he saith, "The law is a schoolmaster to Christ." This similitude also of the schoolmaster is worthy to be noted. Although a schoolmaster be very profitable and necessary to instruct and to bring up children, yet, shew me one child or scholar which loveth his master. What love and obedience the Jews shewed unto their Moses! It appeareth that in every hour (as the history witnesseth) they would with all their hearts have stoned him to death, (Exodus xvii. 4.) It is not possible therefore that the scholar should love his master. For how can he love him which keepeth him in prison; that is to say, which suffereth him not to do that which he gladly would? And if he do any thing against his commandment, by-and-by he is rebuked and chastised; yea, and is constrained moreover to kiss the rod when he is beaten. Is not this (I pray you) a goodly righteousness and obedience of the scho-

lar, that he obeyeth his master severely threatening and so sharply correcting him, and kisseth the rod? But doth he thus with a good-will? As soon as the master hath turned his back, he breaketh the rod, or casteth it into the fire. And if he had any power over his master, he would not suffer himself to be beaten of him, but rather he would beat him. And yet, notwithstanding, the schoolmaster is very necessary for the child, to instruct and chastise him: otherwise, the child, without his discipline, instruction, and good education, should be utterly lost.

The schoolmaster therefore is appointed for the child, to teach him, to bring him up, and to keep him as it were in prison. But to what end, or how long? Is it to the end that this strict and sharp dealing of the schoolmaster should always continue? Or that the child should remain in continual bondage? Not so, but only for a time; that this obedience, this prison and correction, might turn to the profit of the child; that when the time cometh he might be his father's heir. For it is not the father's will that his son should be always subject to the schoolmaster, and always beaten with rods; but, that by his instruction and discipline, he might be made able and meet to be his father's successor.

Even so, saith Paul, the law is nothing else but a schoolmaster: not for ever, but until it have brought us to Christ: as in other words he said also before, "The law was given for transgressions until the blessed seed should come." Also, "The scripture hath shut all under sin," &c. Again, "We were kept under, and shut up to faith which should after be revealed." Wherefore, the law is not only a schoolmaster, but it is a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. For what a schoolmaster were he, which would always torment and beat the child, and teach him nothing at all? And yet, such schoolmasters there were in time past, when schools were nothing else but a prison, and a very hell, and the schoolmasters cruel tyrants and very butchers. The children were always beaten, they learned with continual pain and travel, and few of them came to any proof. The law is

not such a schoolmaster. For it doth not only terrify and torment, (as the foolish schoolmaster beateth his scholars and teacheth them nothing,) but, with his rods he driveth us unto Christ. Like as a good schoolmaster instructeth and exerciseth his scholars in reading and writing, to the end that they may come to the knowledge of good letters and other profitable things, that afterwards, they may have a delight in doing of that, which before, when they were constrained thereunto, they did against their wills.

By this goodly similitude, Paul sheweth what is the true use of the law; namely that it justifieth not hypocrites, for they remain without Christ in their presumption and security: and contrariwise, that it leaveth not in death and damnation those that are of a contrite heart, (so that they use it as Paul teacheth) but driveth them unto Christ. But they, which in these terrors still continue in their wickedness, and do not apprehend Christ by faith, do fall at length into desperation. Paul, therefore, in this allegory of the schoolmaster, most lively expresseth the true use of the law. For, like as the schoolmaster reproveth his scholars, grieveth them, and maketh them heavy; and yet, not to the end that this bondage should always continue, but that it should cease when the children are well brought up and instructed accordingly; and that afterwards, without any constraint of the schoolmaster, they should cheerfully enjoy their liberty and their father's goods: even so, they which are vexed and oppressed with the law, do know, that these terrors and vexations shall not always continue, but that thereby they are prepared to come unto Christ which is to be revealed, and so to receive the liberty of the spirit, &c.

VERSE 24.

That we may be made righteous by faith.

The law is not a schoolmaster to bring us unto another lawgiver which requireth good works, but unto Christ our Justifier and Saviour; that, by faith in him,

we might be justified, and not by works. But when a man feeleth the force and strength of the law, he doth not understand nor believe this. Therefore, he saith, I have lived wickedly, for I have transgressed all the commandments of God; and therefore, I am guilty of eternal death. If God would prolong my life certain years, or at least certain months, I would amend my life and live holily hereafter. Here, of the true use of the law, he maketh an abuse. Reason, being overtaken in these terrors and straits, is bold to promise unto God the fulfilling of all the works of the whole law. And hereof came so many sects and swarms of monks and religious hypocrites, so many ceremonies and so many works, devised to deserve grace and remission of sins. And they which devised such things, thought that the law was a schoolmaster to lead them unto Christ, but to a new law; or, unto Christ as a lawgiver, and not as one that abolished the law.

But the true use of the law, is, to teach me that I am brought to the knowledge of my sin and humbled, that so I may come unto Christ and may be justified by faith. But faith is neither law nor work, but an assured confidence which apprehendeth Christ, "who is the end of the law," Rom. x. And how? Not that he hath abolished the old law and given a new, or that he is a judge which must be pacified by works, as the Papists have taught, but he is the end of the law to all those that believe; that is to say, every one that believeth on him is righteous, and the law shall never accuse him. The law then is good, holy, and just, so that a man use it as he should do. Now they that abuse the law are, first, the hypocrites which attribute unto the law a power to justify; and secondly, they which do despair, not knowing that the law is a schoolmaster to lead men unto Christ; that is to say, that the law humbleth them not to their destruction but to their salvation; for God woundeth that he may heal again, he killeth that he may quicken again.

Now Paul, as before I have said, speaketh of those which are to be justified, and not of those which are jus-

tified already. Therefore, when thou goest about to reason as concerning the law, thou must take the matter of the law, or that whereupon the law worketh; namely, the sinner and the wicked person; whom the law justifieth not, but setteth sin before his eyes, casteth him down and bringeth him to the knowledge of himself; it sheweth him hell, and the wrath and the judgment of God. This is, indeed, the proper office of the law. Then followeth the use of this office; to wit, that the sinner may know that the law doth not reveal unto him his sin, and thus humbleth him, to the end he should despair, but that, by this accusing and bruising, it may drive him unto Christ the Saviour and Comforter. When this is done, he is no longer under the schoolmaster. And this use is very necessary; for seeing the whole world is overwhelmed with sin, it hath need of this ministry of the law that sin may be revealed; otherwise, no man should ever attain to righteousness, as before we have largely declared. But, what worketh the law in them that are already justified by Christ?—Paul answereth by these words; which are, as it were, an addition to that which goeth before;

VERSE 25.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

That is to say, we are free from the law, from the prison, and from our schoolmaster. For when faith is revealed, the law terrifieth and tormeneth us no more. Paul here speaketh of faith, as it was preached and published to the world by Christ in the time before appointed. For Christ, taking upon him our flesh, came once into the world. He abolished the law with all his effects, and delivered from eternal death all those which receive his benefit by faith. If therefore ye look unto Christ, and that which he hath done, there is now no law. For he, coming in the time appointed, took away the law. Now since the law is gone, we are not kept under the tyranny thereof any more, but we live in joy

and safety under Christ, who now so sweetly reigneth in us by his spirit. And where the Lord reigneth, there is liberty. Wherefore, if we would perfectly apprehend Christ, which hath abolished the law by his death, and hath reconciled us unto his Father, that schoolmaster should have no power over us at all. But the law of the members, rebelling against the law of the mind, letteth us that we cannot perfectly lay hold upon Christ. The lack, therefore, is not in Christ, but in us which have not yet put off this flesh, to which sin continually cleaveth as long as we live. Wherefore, as touching ourselves, we are partly free from the law, and partly under the law. According to the spirit, we serve with Paul the "Law of God; but according to the flesh, the law of sin." Rom. vii.

Hereof it followeth, that, as touching the conscience, we are fully delivered from the law; and therefore, that schoolmaster must not rule in it; that is, he must not afflict it with his terrors, threatenings, and captivity. And albeit it go about so to do never so much, yet is not the conscience moved therewith. For it hath Christ crucified before her eyes, who hath removed all the offices of the law out of the conscience, putting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, &c. (Col. ii.) Therefore, even as a virgin knoweth no man, so the conscience must not only be ignorant of the law, but also it must be utterly dead unto the law, and the law likewise unto the conscience. This is not done by any works, or by the righteousness of the law, but by faith which apprehendeth and layeth hold upon Christ. Notwithstanding, sin cleaveth still in the flesh, as touching the effect thereof, which oftentimes accuseth and troubleth the conscience. So long then as the flesh doth remain, so long this schoolmaster the law doth also remain; which many times terrifieth the conscience, and maketh it heavy by revealing of sin and threatening of death. Yet it is raised up again by the daily coming of Christ; who, as he came once into the world in the time before appointed to redeem us from the hard and sharp servitude of our schoolmaster; even so, he cometh daily

tified already. Therefore, when thou goest about to reason as concerning the law, thou must take the matter of the law, or that whereupon the law worketh; namely, the sinner and the wicked person; whom the law justifieth not, but setteth sin before his eyes, casteth him down and bringeth him to the knowledge of himself; it sheweth him hell, and the wrath and the judgment of God. This is, indeed, the proper office of the law. Then followeth the use of this office; to wit, that the sinner may know that the law doth not reveal unto him his sin, and thus humbleth him, to the end he should despair, but that, by this accusing and bruising, it may drive him unto Christ the Saviour and Comforter. When this is done, he is no longer under the schoolmaster. And this use is very necessary; for seeing the whole world is overwhelmed with sin, it hath need of this ministry of the law that sin may be revealed; otherwise, no man should ever attain to righteousness, as before we have largely declared. But, what worketh the law in them that are already justified by Christ?—Paul answereth by these words; which are, as it were, an addition to that which goeth before;

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unto us, spiritually, to the end that we may increase in faith, and in the knowledge of him, that the conscience may apprehend him more fully and perfectly from day to day, and that the law of the flesh and of sin, with the terror of death and all evils that the law bringeth with it, may be daily diminished in us more and more. As long then as we live in the flesh, which is not without sin, the law oftentimes returneth and doth his office, in one more and in another less, as their faith is strong or weak ; and yet, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. For this is the exercise of the law in the saints ; namely, the continual mortification of the flesh, of reason, and of our own strength, and the daily renewing of our inward man, as it is said in 2 Cor. iv.

We receive then the first-fruits of the Spirit : the leaven is hid in the mass of the dough, but all the dough is not yet leavened : now it is yet, but only begun to be leavened. If I behold the leaven, I see nothing else but pure leaven. But if I behold the whole mass, I see that it is not all pure leaven : that is to say, if I behold Christ, I am altogether pure and holy, knowing nothing at all of the law, for Christ is my leaven. But if I behold my own flesh, I feel in myself covetousness, lust, anger, pride, and arrogancy ; also, the fear of death, heaviness, hatred, murmuring and impatency against God. The more these sins are in me, the more Christ is absent from me ; or, if he be present, he is felt but a little. Here we have need of a schoolmaster to exercise and vex this strong ass the flesh, that, by this exercise, sins may be diminished, and a way prepared unto Christ. For as Christ came once, corporally, at the time appointed, abolished the whole law, vanquished sin, and destroyed death and hell ; even so, he cometh, spiritually, without ceasing, and daily quencheth and killeth those sins in us.

This I say, that thou mayest be able to answer if any shall thus object, Christ came into the world, and at once took away all our sins and cleansed us by his blood ; what need we, then, to hear the Gospel or receive the sacraments ? True it is, that, inasmuch as thou

beholdest Christ, the law and sin are quite abolished. But Christ is not yet come unto thee; or, if he be come, yet, notwithstanding, there are remnants of sin in thee; thou art not yet thoroughly leavened. For where concupiscence, heaviness of spirit, and fear of death is, there is yet also the law and sin. Christ is not yet thoroughly come; but when he cometh indeed, he driveth away fear and heaviness, and bringeth peace and quietness of conscience. So far forth then as I do apprehend Christ by faith, so much is the law abolished in me. But my flesh, the world, and the devil, do hinder faith in me that it cannot be perfect. Right gladly I would, that that little light of faith which is in my heart were spread throughout all my body and all the members thereof; but it is not to be done; it is not by-and-by spread, but only beginneth to be spread. In the mean season, this is our consolation, that we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do now begin to be leavened. But we shall be thoroughly leavened, when this body of sin is dissolved, and we shall rise new creatures, wholly, together with Christ.

Albeit then that Christ be one and the same yesterday, to-day, and shall be for ever; (Heb. xiii. 8.) and albeit that all the faithful which were before Christ, had the Gospel and faith; yet, notwithstanding, Christ came once in the time before determined. Faith also came once when the apostles preached, and published the Gospel throughout the world. Moreover, Christ cometh also spiritually, every day. Faith likewise cometh daily by the word of the Gospel. Now when faith is come, the schoolmaster is constrained to give place with his heavy and grievous office. Christ cometh also, spiritually, when we still more and more do know and understand those things which by him are given unto us, and increase in grace and in the knowledge of him, 2 Pet. iii.

CONTINUANCE OF THE LAW.

GALATIANS iii. 19.

Until the seed came unto which the promise was made.

Paul maketh not the law perpetual, but he saith that it was given and added to the promise "for transgressions;" that is to say, to restrain them civilly; but especially, to reveal and to increase them spiritually; and that, not continually, but for a time. Here it is necessary to know, how long the power and tyranny of the law ought to endure which discovereth sin, sheweth unto us what we are, and revealeth the wrath of God. They whose hearts are touched with an inward feeling of these matters, should suddenly perish if they should not receive comfort. Therefore, if the days of the law should not be shortened, no man should be saved. A time, therefore, must be set, and bounds limited to the law, beyond the which it may not reign. How long then ought the dominion of the law to endure? "Until the seed come:" to wit, that seed of which it is written, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The tyranny of the law then must so long continue, until the fulness of time, and until that seed of the blessing come. Not to the end that the law should bring this seed, or give righteousness; but that it should civilly restrain the rebellious and obstinate, and shut them up as it were in prison; and then, spiritually, should reprove them of sin, humble them and terrify them; and when they are thus humbled and beaten down, it should constrain them to look up to that blessed seed.

We may understand the *continuance* of the law, both according to the letter, and also spiritually. According to the letter, thus:—that the law continued until the time of grace. "The law and the prophets (saith Christ) prophesied until John. From the time of John until this day the kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence, and the violent take it by force," Matt. xi. 12, 13. In this time, Christ was baptized and began to preach. At what time also, (after the letter) the law and all the ceremonies of Moses ceased.

Spiritually, the law must be thus understood,—that it ought not to reign in the conscience, any longer than to the appointed time of the blessed seed. When the law sheweth unto me my sin, terrifieth me, and revealeth the wrath and judgment of God, so that I begin to tremble and to despair, there hath the law his bounds, his time, and his end limited; so that now, he ceaseth to exercise his tyranny any more. For when he hath done his office sufficiently, he hath revealed the wrath of God, and terrified enough. Here we must say, 'Now leave off, law: thou hast done enough: thou hast terrified and tormented me enough.' "All thy floods have run over me, and thy terrors have troubled me. Lord, turn not away thy face in thy wrath from thy servant. Rebuke me not, I beseech thee, in thine anger," &c. (Ps. xlii. 7, lxix. 2, xxvi. 9.) When these terrors and troubles come, then is the time and the hour of the blessed seed come. Let the law then give place; which, indeed, is added to reveal and to increase transgressions, and yet, no longer than until that blessed seed be come. When it is come, then let the law leave off to reveal sin, and to terrify any more, and let him deliver up his kingdom to another; that is to say, to the blessed seed, which is Christ; who hath gracious lips, wherewith he accuseth and terrifieth not, but speaketh of far better things than doth the law; namely of grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, victory over sin, death, the devil, and damnation, gotten by his death and passion unto all believers.

Paul therefore sheweth by these words, "Until the seed should come unto whom the blessing was promised," how long the law should endure, literally, and spiritually. According to the law, it ceased after the blessed seed came into the world, taking upon him our flesh, giving the Holy Ghost, and writing a new law in our hearts. But the spiritual time of the law, doth not end at once, but continueth fast rooted in the conscience.

Therefore it is a hard matter for a man which is exercised with the spiritual use of the law, to see the end of the law. For in these terrors and feeling of sin, the mind cannot conceive this hope—that God is merciful, and that he will forgive sins for Christ’s sake; but it judgeth only that God is angry with sinners, and that he accuseth and condemneth them. If faith come not here to raise up again the troubled and afflicted conscience, or else (according to that saying of Christ, “Where two or three be gathered together in my name,” &c.) there be some faithful brother at hand that may comfort him, by the word of God, which is so oppressed and beaten down by the law, desperation and death must needs follow. There, it is perilous for a man to be alone; “Wo be to him that is alone (saith the preacher;) for when he falleth, he hath none to raise him up.” Wherefore, they that ordained that cursed monkish solitary life, gave occasion to many thousands to despair. If a man should separate himself from the company of others for a day or two, to be occupied in prayer, (as we read of Christ, that sometime he went aside alone into the mount, and by night continued in prayer,) there were no danger therein. But when they constrained men continually to live a solitary life, it was a device of the devil himself. For when a man is tempted and is alone, he is not able to raise up himself, no not in the least temptation that can be.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

GALATIANS iii. 6.

As Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.

The apostle now addeth the example of Abraham, and rehearseth the testimony of the scripture. The first is out of Gen. xv. 6. “Abraham believed God,” &c. This place the apostle here mightily prosecuteth, as also he did in his Epistle to the Romans; “If Abraham

(saith he) was justified by the works of the law, he hath righteousness and rejoicing; but not before God, but before men, (Rom. iv. 2, 3.) For before God, there is nothing in him but sin and wrath. Now he was justified before God, not because he did work, but because he did believe. For the scripture saith, "Abraham believed, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This place doth Paul there notably set forth and amplify, as is most worthy; "Abraham (saith he) was not weak in the faith, neither considered he his own body which was now dead, being almost an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb; neither did he doubt of the promise through unbelief, but was strengthened in the faith, and gave glory to God; being fully assured, that whatsoever God had promised he was able to do. Now it is not written for him only that it was imputed to him for righteousness, but for us also," &c. (Rom. iv. 19, 20.)

Paul, by these words, "Abraham believed," maketh, of faith in God, the chiefest worship, the chiefest duty, the chiefest obedience, and the chiefest sacrifice. Let him that is a rhetorician amplify this place, and he shall see, that faith is an almighty thing, and that the power thereof is infinite and inestimable, for it giveth glory unto God, which is the highest service that can be given unto him. Now, to give glory unto God, is, to believe in him, to count him true, wise, righteous, merciful, almighty; briefly, to acknowledge him to be the author and giver of all goodness. This reason doth not, but faith. That is it which maketh us divine people; and, as a man would say, it is the creator of certain divinity, not in the substance of God, but in us. For without faith, God loseth in us his glory, wisdom, righteousness, truth, and mercy. To conclude, no majesty or divinity remaineth unto God, where faith is not. And the chiefest thing that God requireth of man, is, that he give unto him his glory and his divinity; that is to say, that he take him not for an idol, but for God who regardeth him, heareth him, sheweth mercy unto him, and helpeth him. This being done, God hath his full and perfect

divinity : that is, he hath whatsoever a faithful hea can attribute unto him. To be able therefore to give that glory unto God, is the wisdom of wisdoms, the righteousness of righteousnesses, the religion of religions, and the sacrifice of sacrifices ! Hereby we may perceive, what an high and excellent righteousness faith is ; and so, by the contrary, what an horrible and grievous sin infidelity is.

Whosoever then believeth the Word of God, as Abraham did, is righteous before God ; because, he hath faith which giveth glory to God ; that is, he giveth to God that which is due to him. For faith saith thus, I believe thee, O God, when thou speakest. And what saith God ? Impossible things, lies, foolish, weak, absurd, abominable, heretical, and devilish things, if ye believe reason ! For what is more absurd, foolish, and impossible, than when God saith to Abraham, that he should have a son of the barren and dead body of his wife Sarah !

So, if we will follow the judgment of reason, God setteth forth absurd and impossible things, when he setteth out unto us the articles of the Christian faith. Indeed, it seemeth to reason an absurd and a foolish thing, that, in the Lord's Supper, is offered unto us the body and blood of Christ ; that baptism, is the laver of the new birth and of the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; that the dead shall rise at the last day ; that Christ the Son of God was conceived and carried in the womb of the Virgin Mary ; that he was born ; that he suffered the most reproachful death of the cross ; that he was raised up again ; that he now sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, and that he hath power both in heaven and in earth. For this cause, Paul calleth the Gospel of Christ crucified, the word of the cross and foolish preaching, (1 Cor. i. 18 ;) which, to the Jews was offensive, and to the Gentiles foolish doctrine. Wherefore, reason doth not understand, that to hear the Word of God and to believe it, is the chiefest service that God requireth of us. But it thinketh, that those things which it chooseth and doth of a good intent, (as they call it,) and of her own devotion, please God. Therefore, when

God speaketh, reason judgeth his word to be heresy and the word of the devil, for it seemeth unto it absurd and foolish.

But faith killeth reason, and slayeth that beast which the whole world and all creatures cannot kill. So, Abraham killed it by faith in the word of God whereby seed was promised unto him of Sarah, who was barren and now past child-bearing. Unto this word reason yieldeth not straightway in Abraham, but it fought against faith in him, judging it to be an absurd, a foolish, and impossible thing that Sarah, who was now not only ninety years old, but also was barren by nature, should bring forth a son. Thus, faith wrestled with reason in Abraham, but herein faith got the victory, and killed and crucified reason, that most cruel and pestilent enemy of God. So, all the godly, entering with Abraham into the darkness of faith, do still reason; saying, reason, thou art foolish: thou dost not savour those things which belong unto God: therefore, speak not against me, but hold thy peace. Judge not, but hear the Word of God and believe it. So, the godly by faith, kill such a beast as is greater than the whole world; and thereby, do offer unto God a most acceptable sacrifice and service.

And, in comparison of this sacrifice of the faithful, all the religions of all nations, and all the works of all monks and merit-mongers, are nothing at all. For by this sacrifice, first, as I said, they kill reason, a great and mighty enemy of God. For reason despiseth God and denieth his wisdom, justice, power, truth, mercy, majesty, and divinity. Moreover, by the same sacrifice, they yield glory unto God: that is, they believe him to be just, good, faithful, true, &c.: they believe that he can do all things: that all his words are holy, true, lively, and effectual, &c.: which is a most acceptable obedience unto God. Wherefore, there can be no greater or more holy religion in the world, nor more acceptable unto God, than faith is!

Contrariwise, the justiciaries and such as seek

righteousness by their own works, lacking faith, do many things. They fast, they pray, they watch, they lay crosses upon themselves. But because they think to appease the wrath of God, and deserve grace by these things, they give no glory to God: that is, they do not judge him to be merciful, true, and keeping promise, &c. but to be an angry Judge which must be pacified with works. And by this means, they despise God and make him a liar in all his promises; and they deny Christ and all his benefits. To conclude, they thrust God out of his seat, and set themselves in his place. For they, rejecting and despising the word of God, do choose unto themselves such a service of God, and such works, as God hath not commanded. They imagine, that God hath a pleasure therein; and they hope to receive a reward of him for the same. Therefore, they kill not reason, that mighty enemy of God, but quicken it: and they take from God his majesty and his divinity, and attribute the same unto their own works. Wherefore, only faith giveth glory to God, as Paul witnesseth of Abraham. "Abraham (saith he) was strong in the faith, and gave glory to God; being fully assured, that whatsoever God had promised he was able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 20, 21.

Christian righteousness, consisteth in the faith of the heart, and God's imputation. It is not without cause that he addeth this sentence out of the 15th chapter of Genesis, "And it was imputed unto him for righteousness." For Christian righteousness, consisteth in two things: that is to say, in the faith of the heart, and in God's imputation. Faith is indeed a formal righteousness, and yet, this righteousness is not enough: for after faith, there remain yet certain remnants of sin in our flesh. This sacrifice of faith began in Abraham, but, at the last it was finished in his death. Wherefore, the other part of righteousness must needs be added also, to finish the same in us; that is to say, God's imputation. For faith giveth not enough to God, because it is imperfect, yea rather, our faith is but a little spark of faith

which beginneth to render unto God his true divinity. We have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, but not yet the tenths. Besides this, reason is not utterly killed in this life. Which may appear by our concupiscence, wrath, impatience, and other fruits of the flesh, and of infidelity yet remaining in us. Yea the holiest that live have not yet a full and continual joy in God, but have their sundry passions, sometimes sad, sometimes merry, as the scriptures witness of the prophets and apostles. But such faults are not laid to their charge because of their faith in Christ; for otherwise, no flesh should be saved. We conclude, therefore, upon these words, "it was imputed to him for righteousness," that righteousness indeed beginneth through faith, and by the same we have the first-fruits of the Spirit: but because faith is weak, it is not made perfect without God's imputation. Wherefore, faith beginneth righteousness, but imputation maketh it perfect unto the day of Christ.

The Popish sophisters and schoolmen dispute also of imputation, when they speak of the good acceptance of the work; but, beside and clean contrary to the scripture; for they wrest it only to works. They do not consider the uncleanness and inward poison lurking in the heart, as incredulity, doubting, contemning and hating of God; which most pernicious and perilous beasts, are the fountain and cause of all mischief. They consider no more but outward and gross faults and unrighteousness, which are little rivers proceeding and issuing out of those fountains. Therefore, they attribute acceptance to works: that is to say, that God doth accept our works, not of duty, but of congruence. Contrariwise, we, excluding all works, do go to the very head of this beast which is called reason, which is the fountain and head-spring of all mischiefs. For reason feareth not God: it loveth not God; it trusteth not in God, but proudly contemneth him. It is not moved with his threatenings or his promises; it is not delighted with his words or works, but it murmureth against him: it is angry with him, and judgeth and hateth him. To be short, it is an enemy to God (Rom. viii. 7,) not giving him his glory. This pes-

tilent beast reason, I say, being once slain, all outward and gross vices should be nothing.

Wherefore, we must first and before all things go about by faith to kill infidelity, the contempt and hating of God, and murmuring against his judgment, his wrath, and all his words and works. For then do we kill reason, which can be killed by none other means, but by faith: which, in believing God, giveth unto him his glory, notwithstanding that he speaketh those things which seem both foolish, absurd, and impossible unto reason: notwithstanding also, that God setteth forth himself otherwise than reason is able either to judge or to conceive: that is to say after this manner: — I will account and pronounce thee as righteous, not for the keeping of the law, not for thy works and thy merits, but for thy faith in Jesus Christ mine only begotten Son, who was born, suffered, was crucified, and died for thy sins; and that sin which remaineth in thee, I will not impute unto thee. If reason then be not killed, and all kinds of religion, and all services of God under heaven that are invented by men to get righteousness before God, be not condemned, the righteousness of faith cannot take place.

When reason heareth this, by-and-by it is offended; it rageth and uttereth all her malice against God; saying, Are then my good works nothing? Have I then laboured and borne the heat of the day in vain? (Matt. xx. 11.) Hereof ariseth those uproars of nations, of kings and princes against the Lord and against his Christ (Psalm ii.) For the world neither will nor can suffer that his wisdom, righteousness, religions, and worshippings, should be reprovèd and condemned. The Pope with all his Popish rabblement will not seem to err, much less will he suffer himself to be condemned.

Wherefore, let those which give themselves to the study of the Holy Scripture, learn out of it this saying, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," to set forth truly and rightly this true Christian righteousness after this manner; — that it is a faith and confidence in the Son of God; or rather, a

confidence of the heart in God though Jesus Christ. And let them add this clause as a difference, — which faith and confidence is accounted righteousness for Christ's sake. For these two things, as I said before, work Christian righteousness; namely, faith in the heart which is a gift of God and assuredly believeth in Christ; and also, that God accepteth this imperfect faith for perfect righteousness for Christ's sake, in whom I have begun to believe. Because of this faith in Christ, God seeth not my doubting of his good-will towards me, my distrust, my heaviness of spirit, and other sins which are yet in me. For as long as I live in the flesh, sin is truly in me. But because I am covered under the shadow of Christ's wings, as is the chicken under the wing of the hen, and dwell without all fear under that most ample and large heaven of the forgiveness of sins which is spread over me, God covereth and pardoneth the remnant of sin in me; that is to say, because of that faith wherewith I began to lay hold upon Christ, he accepteth my imperfect righteousness even for perfect righteousness, and counteth my sin for no sin, which, notwithstanding, is sin indeed.

So we shroud ourselves under the covering of Christ's flesh; who is "our cloudy pillar for the day, and our pillar of fire for the night (Exod. xiii. 21,) lest God should see our sin. And although we see it, and for the same do feel the terrors of conscience, yet, fleeing unto Christ our Mediator and Reconciler, through whom we are made perfect, we are sure and safe. For as all things are in him, so, through him, we have all things, who also doth supply whatsoever is wanting in us. When we believe this, God winketh at the sins and remnants of sin yet sticking in our flesh, and so covereth them as if they were no sins. Because (saith he) thou believest in my Son, although thou have many sins; yet, notwithstanding, they shall be forgiven thee, until thou be clean delivered from them by death.

Let Christians learn with all diligence to understand this article of Christian righteousness. And to this end, let them read Paul, and read him again both often and

with great diligence, and let them compare the first with the last, yea, let them compare Paul wholly and fully with himself; then shall they find it to be true, that Christian righteousness consisteth in these two things, namely, in faith which giveth glory unto God, and in God's imputation. For faith is weak, as I have said, and therefore God's imputation must needs be joined withal; that is to say, that God will not lay to our charge the remnant of sin; that he will not punish it nor condemn us for it; but will cover it and freely forgive it, as though it were nothing at all; not for our sake, nor for our worthiness and works, but for Jesus Christ's sake in whom we believe.

Thus a Christian man is both righteous and a sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a child of God. These contraries no sophister will admit, for they know not the true manner of justification. And this was the cause why they constrained men to work well so long, until they should feel in themselves no sin at all. Whereby they gave occasion to many (which striving with all their endeavour to be perfectly righteous could not attain thereunto,) to become stark mad. Yea, an infinite number also of those which were the authors of this devilish opinion, at the hour of death, were driven to desperation. Which thing had happened unto me also, if Christ had not mercifully looked upon me and delivered me out of this terror.

Contrariwise, we teach and comfort the afflicted sinner after this manner. Brother, it is not possible for thee to become so righteous in this life, that thou shouldst feel no sin at all, that thy body should be clear like the sun without spot or blemish, but thou hast yet wrinkles and spots, and yet art thou holy notwithstanding. But thou wilt say, how can I be holy when I have and feel sin in me? I answer: in that thou dost feel and acknowledge thy sin, it is a good token; give thanks to God, and despair not. It is one step of health, when the sick man doth acknowledge and confess his infirmity. But how shall I be delivered from sin? Run to Christ the physician, which healeth them that are broken in

heart, and saveth sinners. Follow not the judgment of reason, which telleth thee that he is angry with sinners, but kill reason and believe in Christ. If thou believe, thou art righteous ; because thou givest glory to God, that he is almighty, merciful, true, &c. and thou justifiest and praisest God. To be brief, thou yieldest unto him his divinity, and whatsoever else belongeth unto him. And the sin which remaineth in thee is not laid to thy charge, but is pardoned for Christ's sake in whom thou believest ; who is perfectly just, whose righteousness is thy righteousness, and thy sin his sin.

Here we see, that every Christian is an high-priest. For first, he offereth up and killeth his own reason and the wisdom of the flesh. Then, he giveth glory to God, that he is righteous, true, patient, pitiful, and merciful. And this is that daily sacrifice of the New Testament, which must be offered evening and morning. The evening sacrifice, is to kill reason : the morning sacrifice, is to glorify God. Thus a Christian daily and continually is occupied in this double sacrifice, and in the exercise thereof. And no man is able to set forth sufficiently, the excellency and dignity of this Christian Sacrifice.

This is therefore a strange and wonderful definition of Christian righteousness :—that it is the imputation of God for righteousness, or unto righteousness, because of our faith in Christ, or for Christ's sake. When the popish schoolmen hear this definition, they laugh at it. For they imagine, that righteousness is a certain quality poured into the soul, and afterwards spread into all the parts of man. They cannot put away the vain imaginations of reason ; which teacheth, that a right judgment and a good will, or a good intent, is true righteousness. This unspeakable gift, therefore, excelleth all reason ;—that God doth account and acknowledge him for righteous, without works, which embraceth his Son by faith alone, who was sent into the world, was born, suffered, and was crucified for us.

This matter, as touching the words, is easy ; (to wit,

that righteousness is not essentially in us as the papists reason out of Aristotle, but without us in the grace of God only and in his imputation; and that, there is no essential substance of righteousness in us besides that weak faith or first-fruits of faith, whereby we have begun to apprehend Christ, and yet sin in the mean time verily remaineth in us;) but, in very deed, it is no small or light matter, but weighty and of great importance. For Christ, which was given for us, and whom we apprehend by faith, hath done no small thing for us, but, as Paul said before, "He hath loved us and given himself in very deed for us." He was made accursed for us, (Gal. ii. 10. iii. 13.) And this is no vain speculation, that Christ was delivered for my sins, and was accursed for me that I might be delivered from everlasting death. Therefore, to apprehend that Son by faith, and with the heart to believe him given unto us (Isaiah ix. 6,) and for us of God, causeth that God doth account that faith, although it be imperfect, for perfect righteousness.

And here, we are altogether in another world far from reason; where we dispute, not what we ought to do, or with what grace we may deserve grace and forgiveness of sins, but we are in a matter of most high and heavenly divinity, where we do hear this Gospel or glad tidings,—that Christ died for us, and that we, believing this, are accounted righteous, though sins notwithstanding do remain in us, and that great sins. So our Saviour Christ also defineth the righteousness of faith; "The Father (saith he) loveth you." Wherefore doth he love you? Not because ye were Pharisees unreprouable in the righteousness of the law, circumcised, doing good works, fasting, &c.; but, because I have chosen you out of the world, and ye have done nothing but that ye have loved me, and believed that I am come out from the Father. This object (I) being sent from the Father, pleased you. And because you have apprehended and embraced this object, therefore, the Father loveth you, and therefore ye please him. And yet notwithstanding, in another place, he calleth them evil, and

commandeth them to ask for the forgiveness of their sins. These two things are quite contrary; to wit, that a Christian is righteous and beloved of God, and yet, notwithstanding, he is a sinner. For God cannot deny his own nature; that is, he must needs hate sin, and sinners; and this he doth of necessity, for otherwise, he should be unrighteous and love sin. How then can these two contradictions stand together? I am a sinner and most worthy of God's wrath and indignation: and yet the Father loveth me? Here nothing cometh between, but only Christ the Mediator. The Father (saith he) doth not therefore love you, because ye are worthy of love, but because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from him.

Thus a Christian man abideth in true humility, feeling sin in him effectually, and confessing himself to be worthy of wrath, of the judgment of God, and of everlasting death for the same, that he may be humbled in this life. And yet, notwithstanding, he continueth still in his pride, in the which he turneth unto Christ, and in him, he lifteth up himself against this feeling of God's wrath and judgment, and believeth, that not only the remnants of sin are not imputed unto him, but that also he is loved of the Father, not for his own sake, but for Christ's sake whom the Father loveth.

Hereby now we may see, how faith justifieth without works; and yet, notwithstanding, how imputation of righteousness is also necessary. Sins do remain in us which God utterly hateth. Therefore, it is necessary that we should have imputation of righteousness, which we obtain through Christ, and for his sake who is given unto us and received of us by faith. In the mean time, as long as we live here, we are carried and nourished in the bosom of the mercy and long-sufferance of God, until the body of sin be abolished, and we raised up as new creatures in that great day. Then shall there be new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell. In the mean while, under this heaven, sin and wicked men do dwell, and the godly also have sin

dwelling in them. For this cause, Paul, (Rom. vii.,) complaineth of sin which remaineth in the saints; yet notwithstanding, he saith afterwards in the eighth chapter, "That there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesu." Now, how shall these things, so contrary and repugnant, be reconciled together;—that sin in us, is no sin? that he which is damnable, shall not be condemned? that he which is rejected, shall not be rejected? that he which is worthy of the wrath of God and everlasting damnation, shall not be punished? The only reconciler hereof is the Mediator between God and man, even Jesus Christ; as Paul saith, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesu."

NATURE AND EXPECTATION OF FAITH AND HOPE, AND THEIR DIFFERENCE.

GALATIANS V. 5.

For we in spirit wait for the hope of righteousness through faith.

Paul here knitteth up the matter with a notable conclusion; saying, Ye will be justified by the law, by circumcision, and by works; but we seek not to be justified by this means, lest Christ should be made utterly unprofitable unto us, and we become debtors to perform the whole law, and so finally fall away from grace; "but we wait in spirit through faith for the hope of righteousness." Every word is here diligently to be noted, for they are pithy and full of power. He doth not only say, as he is wont, we are justified by faith, or in spirit by faith, but moreover addeth, "we wait for the hope of righteousness," including hope also that he may comprehend the whole matter of faith.

Hope, after the manner of the scriptures, is taken two ways; namely, for the thing that is hoped for, and for the affection of him that hopeth. For the thing that is hoped for, it is taken in the first chapter to the Colossians, "For the hope's sake which is laid up for

you in heaven : that is to say, the thing which ye hope for. For the affection of him that hopeth, it is taken in the eighth chapter to the Romans, “ For we are saved by hope.” So, hope in this place also may be taken two ways, and so it yieldeth a double sense. The first is, we wait in Spirit through faith for the hope of righteousness ; that is to say, the righteousness hoped for ; which shall be certainly revealed in such time as it pleaseth the Lord to give it. The second, we wait in Spirit by faith for righteousness with hope and desire ; that is to say, we are righteous ; howbeit our righteousness is not yet revealed, but hangeth yet in hope. For as long as we live here, sin remaineth in our flesh ; there is also a law in our flesh and members rebelling against the law of our mind, and leading us captives unto the service of sin. Now when these affections of the flesh do rage and reign, and we on the other side do through the Spirit wrestle against the same, then is there place for hope. Indeed, we have begun to be justified through faith. Whereby also we have received the first-fruits of the Spirit : and the mortification of the flesh is begun in us, but we be not yet perfectly righteous. It remaineth then that we be perfectly justified, and this is it which we hope for. So, our righteousness is not yet in actual possession, but lieth under hope.

This is a sweet and sound consolation, whereby afflicted and troubled consciences, feeling their sin, and terrified with every fiery dart of the devil, may be marvellously comforted. For the feeling of sin, the wrath of God, death, hell, and other terrors, are wonderfully strong in the conflict of conscience : as I myself, being taught by experience, do know. Then counsel must be given to the poor afflicted in this way. Brother, thou desirest to have a sensible feeling of thy justification ; that is, thou wouldest have such a feeling of God’s favour as thou hast of thine own sin, but that will not be. But thy righteousness ought to surmount all feeling of sin ; that is to say, thy righteousness or justification whereupon thou holdest, standeth not upon thine own feeling, but upon the hoping that it shall be revealed unto thee when

it pleaseth the Lord. Wherefore, thou must not judge according to the feeling of sin which troubleth and terrifieth thee, but according to the promise and doctrine of faith, whereby Christ is promised unto thee, who is thy perfect and everlasting righteousness. Thus the hope of the afflicted, consisting in the inward affection, is stirred up by faith, in the midst of all terrors and feeling of sin, to hope that he is righteous. Moreover, if hope be here taken for the thing which is hoped for, it is thus to be understood :—that, that which a man now seeth not, he hopeth, in time, shall be made perfect and clearly manifest.

Either sense may well stand ; but the first, touching the inward desires and affections of hoping, bringeth more plentiful consolation. For my righteousness is not yet perfect, it cannot yet be felt ; yet I do not despair ; for faith, sheweth unto me Christ in whom I trust ; and when I have laid hold of him by faith, I wrestle against the fiery darts of the devil, and I take a good heart through hope against the feeling of sin ; assuring myself, that I have a perfect righteousness prepared for me in heaven. So both these sayings are true :—that I am made righteous already by that righteousness which is begun in me ; and also, I am raised up in the same hope against sin, and wait for the full consummation of perfect righteousness in heaven. These things are not rightly understood, but when they are put in practice.

WHAT DIFFERENCE THERE IS BETWEEN FAITH AND HOPE.

Here ariseth a question, what difference there is between Faith and Hope. The sophisters and schoolmen have laboured very much in this matter, but they could never show any certainty. Yea to us which travel in the holy scriptures with much diligence, and also with more fulness and power of spirit, (be it spoken without any brag,) it is hard to find any difference. For there is so great affinity between Faith and Hope, that the one cannot be separate from the other. Notwithstanding,

there is a difference between them, which is gathered of their several offices, diversity of working, and of their ends.

First: They differ in respect of their subject; that is, of the ground wherein they rest. For faith resteth in the understanding, and hope resteth in the will. But in very deed they cannot be separated, the one having respect to the other, as the two cherubim of the mercy-seat which could not be divided.

Secondly: They differ in respect of their office; that is, of their working. For faith telleth what is to be done; it teacheth, prescribeth, and directeth; and it is a knowledge. Hope is an exhortation which stirreth up the mind that it may be strong, bold, and courageous, that it may suffer and endure adversity, and in the midst thereof wait for better things.

Thirdly: They differ as touching their object; that is, the special matter whereunto they look. For faith hath for her object the truth; teaching us to cleave surely thereunto, and looketh upon the word and promise of the thing that is promised. Hope hath for her object the goodness of God, and looketh upon the thing that is promised in the word; that is, upon such matters as faith teaches us to be hoped for.

Fourthly: They differ in their order: for faith is the beginning of life before all tribulation, Heb. xi.: but hope cometh afterwards, proceeding of tribulation, Rom. v.

Fifthly: They differ by the diversity of working: for faith is a teacher and a judge, fighting against errors and heresies, and judging spirits and doctrines: but hope is, as it were, the general or captain of the field, fighting against tribulation, the cross, impatiency, heaviness of spirit, weakness, desperation, and blasphemy: and it waiteth for good things even in the midst of evils.

Therefore when I am instructed by faith in the word of God, and lay hold of Christ, believing in him with the whole heart, then am I righteous by this knowledge. When I am so justified by faith, or by this knowledge, by-and-by cometh the devil, the father of lies, and laboureth to extinguish my faith by wiles and subtleties;

that is to say, by lies, errors, and heresies. Moreover, because he is a murderer, he goeth about to oppress it by violence. Here hope wrestling, layeth hold on the thing revealed by faith, and overcometh the devil that warreth against faith: and after this victory followeth peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. So that in very deed faith and hope can scarcely be discerned the one from the other; and yet, is there a certain difference between them. And that it may be the better perceived, I will set out the matter by a similitude.

In civil government, prudence and fortitude do differ; and yet, these two virtues are so joined together, that they cannot easily be severed. Now fortitude is a constancy of mind which is not discouraged in adversity, but endureth valiantly, and waiteth for better things. But if fortitude be not guided by prudence, it is but temerity and rashness. On the other side, if fortitude be not joined with prudence, that prudence is but in vain, and unprofitable. Even so in divinity, faith without hope is nothing. For hope endureth in adversity, and is constant therein, and in the end overcometh all evils. And on the other side, like as fortitude without prudence is rashness, even so hope without faith is presumption in spirit, and a tempting of God; for it hath no knowledge of Christ, and of the truth which faith teacheth, and therefore it is but a blind rashness and arrogancy. Wherefore a godly man afore all things, must have a right understanding, instructed by faith, according to the which the mind may be guided in afflictions, that it may hope for those good things which faith hath revealed and taught.

To be short: Faith is conceived by teaching; for thereby the mind is instructed what the truth is. Hope is conceived by exhortation; for by exhortation hope is stirred in afflictions, which confirmeth him that is already justified by faith, that he be not overcome by adversities, but that he may be able more strongly to resist them. Notwithstanding, if the spark of faith should not give light to the will, it could not be persuaded to lay hold upon hope. We have faith then whereby we are

taught, we understand, and know the heavenly wisdom, apprehend Christ, and continue in his grace. But as soon as we lay hold upon Christ by faith, and confess him, forthwith our enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, rise up against us, hating and persecuting us most cruelly both in body and spirit. Wherefore, we thus believing and justified by faith, "in spirit do wait for the hope of our righteousness." And we wait through patience, for we see and feel the flat contrary. For the world with his prince, the devil, assaileth us mightily both within and without. Moreover, sin yet still remaineth in us which driveth into heaviness. Notwithstanding, we give not over for all this, but raise up our minds strongly through faith, which lighteneth, teacheth, and guideth the same. And thus we abide firm and constant, and overcome all adversities through him which hath loved us, until our righteousness which we believe and wait for, be revealed. By faith therefore we began, by hope we continue, and by revelation we shall obtain the whole. In the mean time, whilst we live here, because we believe, we teach the word and publish the knowledge of Christ unto others. Thus doing we suffer persecution (according to this text, "I believed and therefore did I speak, and I was sore troubled,") with patience, being strengthened and encouraged through hope: whereunto the scripture exhorteth us with most sweet and comfortable promises, taught and revealed unto us by faith. And thus doth hope spring up and increase in us, Rom. xv. That through patience and comfort of the scriptures, we may have hope.

Paul therefore, not without cause, joineth patience in tribulation, and hope together, in the fifth and eighth to the Romans, and in other places also, for by them hope is stirred up. But faith (as also I have shewed before) goeth before hope: for it is the beginning of life, and beginneth before all tribulation; for it learneth Christ, and apprehendeth him without the cross. Notwithstanding, the knowledge of Christ cannot be long without the cross, without troubles and conflicts. In this case the mind must be stirred up to a fortitude of spirit

(for hope is nothing else but a spiritual fortitude, as faith is nothing else but a spiritual prudence) which consisteth in suffering, according to this saying, "That through patience," &c. These three things then dwell together in the faithful:—Faith, which teacheth the truth, and defendeth from errors; Hope, which endureth and overcometh all adversities, as well bodily as ghostly; and Charity, which worketh all good things, as it followeth in the text. And so is a man entire and perfect in this life, as well within as without, until the righteousness be revealed which he waiteth for; and this shall be a perfect and everlasting righteousness.

Moreover, this place containeth a singular doctrine and consolation. As touching the doctrine, it sheweth that we are made righteous, not by the works, sacrifices, or ceremonies of Moses's law, much less by the works and traditions of men, but by Christ alone. Whatsoever then the world counted to be good and holy without Christ, is nothing else but sin, error, and flesh. Wherefore circumcision, and the observation of the law also, the works, religions, and vows of the Monks, and of all such as trust in their own righteousness, are altogether carnal. But we, saith Paul, are far above all these things in the spirit and inward man, for we possess Christ by faith, and in the midst of our afflictions through hope, we wait for that righteousness which we possess already by faith.

The comfort is this: that in serious conflicts and terrors, wherein the feeling of sin, heaviness of spirit, desperation and such like is very strong, (for they enter deeply into the heart and mightily assail it,) thou must not follow thine own feeling; for if thou do, thou wilt say, I feel the horrible terrors of the law, and the tyranny of sin, not only rebelling against me, but also subduing me, and leading me captive; and I feel no comfort or righteousness at all. Therefore I am a sinner, and not righteous. If I be a sinner, then am I guilty of everlasting death. But against this feeling thou must wrestle and say, Although I feel myself utterly overwhelmed and swallowed up with sin: and my heart

telleth me that God is offended and angry with me, yet in very deed it is not true, but my own sense and feeling so judgeth. The word of God, (which in these terrors I ought to follow, and not mine own sense,) teacheth a far other thing; namely, that God is near unto them that are of "a troubled heart, and saveth them that are of an humble spirit." Also "He despiseth not an humble and a contrite heart." Moreover Paul sheweth here, that they which are justified in spirit by faith, do not feel the hope of righteousness, but still wait for it.

Wherefore, when the law accuseth and sin terrifieth thee, and thou feelest nothing but the wrath and indignation of God, despair not for all that, but take unto thee the armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and the sword of the Spirit, and try how good and how valiant a warrior thou art. Lay hold of Christ by faith, who is the Lord of the law and of sin, and of all things else which accompany them. Believing in him, thou art justified: which thing reason and the feeling of thine own heart, when thou art tempted, do not tell thee, but the word of God. Moreover in the midst of these conflicts and terrors, which often return and exercise thee, wait thou patiently through hope for righteousness, which thou hast now by faith, although it be yet but begun and imperfect, until it be revealed and made perfect in the kingdom of heaven.

But thou wilt say: I feel not myself to have any righteousness, or at least I feel it but very little.—Thou must not feel, but believe, that thou hast righteousness. And except thou believe that thou art righteous, thou doest great injury unto Christ, who hath cleansed thee by the washing of water through the word; who also died upon the cross, condemned sin, and killed death; that through him thou mightest obtain righteousness and everlasting life. These things thou canst not deny; (except thou wilt openly shew thyself to be wicked and blasphemous against God, and utterly to despise God, all his promises, and Jesus Christ, with all his benefits;) and so consequently, thou canst not deny but that thou art righteous.

Let us learn therefore in great and horrible terrors,

when our conscience feeleth nothing but sin, and judgeth that God is angry with us, and that Christ hath turned his face from us, not to follow the sense and feeling of our own heart, but to stick to the word of God ; which saith, that God is not angry, but looketh to the afflicted, and to such as are troubled in spirit, and tremble at his word (Isaiah lxvi. 2) ; and that Christ turneth not himself away from such as labour and are heavy laden, but refresheth and comforteth them, (Matt. xi. 28.) This place therefore teacheth plainly, that the law and works bring unto us no righteousness or comfort at all ; but this doth the Holy Ghost only in the faith of Christ, who raiseth up hope in terrors and tribulations, which endureth and overcometh all adversities. Very few there be that know how weak and feeble faith and hope are under the cross and in the conflict. For it seemeth they are but as smoking flax which is ready by-and-by to be put out by a vehement wind. But the faithful who believe in the midst of these assaults and terrors hoping against hope ; that is to say, fighting through faith in the promise as touching Christ against the feeling of sin and of the wrath of God, do afterwards find by experience, that this spark of faith being very little, (as it appeareth to natural reason, for reason can scarcely feel it,) is a mighty fire, and swalloweth up all our sins and all our terrors.

There is nothing more dear or precious in all the world to the true children of God than this doctrine. For they that understand this doctrine, do know that whereof all the world are ignorant : namely, that sin, death, and all other miseries, afflictions and calamities, as well corporal as spiritual, do turn to the benefit and profit of the elect. Moreover they know, that God is then most near unto them when he seemeth to be farthest off, and that he is then a most merciful and loving Saviour when he seemeth to be most angry, to afflict, and to destroy. Also they know, that they have an everlasting righteousness, which they wait for through hope, as a certain and sure possession laid up for them in heaven, even when they feel the horrible terrors of sin and death. Moreover, that they are then lords of all things, when they are most destitute of all things according to

that saying, "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. vi. 10. This, saith the scripture, is to conceive comfort through hope. But this cunning is not learned without great and often temptations.

CHARITY NO FAITH.

THE DIVINITY OF THE SCHOOLMEN.

'When a man doth any good work, God accepteth it, and for that work he poureth into him charity:' which they call, *charity infused*. This charity (say they) is a quality remaining in the heart, and this they call *formal righteousness*; which manner of speaking, it is expedient for you to know. And they can abide nothing less, than to hear that this quality forming and adorning the soul, as whiteness doth a wall, should not be counted righteousness. They can climb no higher than to this cogitation of man's reason,—that man is righteous by his own formal righteousness, which is grace making him acceptable unto God; that is to say, charity. So, to this quality cleaving unto the soul, that is to wit, charity, (which is a work after the law, for the law saith thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.) they attribute righteousness; that is to say, true Christian righteousness; and they say, that this righteousness is worthy of everlasting life, and he that hath it is formally righteous; and moreover, he is effectually or actually righteous, because he now doth good works whereunto everlasting life is due. This is the opinion of the Popish schoolmen, yea, even of the best of them all.

Some other there be which are not so good, as Scotus, and Occam; which said, that for the obtaining of the grace of God, this charity infused or given of God is not necessary, but that a man, even by his own natural strength, may procure this charity above all things. For so reasoneth Scotus.—If a man love a creature, a young man a maiden, a covetous man money, which are less good, he may also love God which is the greater good. If he have a love of the creature through his natural strength, much more hath he a love to the Creator.

With this argument were all the sophisters convicted, and none of them was able to refute it. Notwithstanding thus they reply—

The scripture compelleth us to confess (say they) that God, beside the natural love and charity which is ingrafted in us, (wherewith alone he is not contented,) requireth also charity which he himself giveth. And hereby they accuse God as a tyrant and a cruel exactor, who is not content that we keep and fulfil his law, but above the law, (which we ourselves are all to fulfil,) requireth also, that we should accomplish it with other circumstances and furniture, as apparel to the same. As if a mistress should not be contented that her cook had dressed her meat excellently well, but should chide her for that she did not prepare the same, being decked with precious apparel, and adorned with a crown of gold. Now what a mistress were this, who, when her cook had done all that she was bound to do, and also exactly performed the same, would moreover require that she should wear such ornaments as she could not have? Even so, what a one should God be, if he should require his law to be fulfilled of us, (which notwithstanding by our own natural strength we observe and fulfil,) with such furniture as we cannot have?

But here, lest they should seem to avouch contrary things, they make a distinction, and say, that the law is fulfilled two manner of ways. First, according to the substance of the deed; and secondly, according to the mind of the commander. According to the substance of the deed (say they) we may fulfil all things which the law commandeth, but not according to the mind of the commander: which is, that God is not contented that thou hast done all things which are commanded in the law, (although he can require no more of thee,) but he further requireth that thou shouldst fulfil the law in charity: not that charity which thou hast by nature, but that which is above nature, and heavenly, which he himself giveth. And what is this else but to make God a tyrant and a tormentor, which requireth that of us which we are not able to perform? And it is in a man-

er as much as if he should say, that the fault is not in us, if we be damned, but in God, which, with this circumstance requireth his law to be accomplished of us.

These things I do the more diligently repeat, that you may see how far they have strayed from the true sense of the scripture, which have said that by our own natural strength we may love God above all things; or at least, by the work wrought we may deserve grace and everlasting life. And because God is not content that we fulfil the law according to the substance of the deed, but will have us also to fulfil the same according to the mind of the commander. Therefore the scripture farther compelleth us to have a quality above nature poured into us from above, and that is charity; which they call carnal righteousness adorning and beautifying faith, being also the cause that faith justifieth us. So faith is the body, and the shell; charity the life, the kernel, the form and furniture. These are the monstrous dreams of the schoolmen.

But we, instead of this charity, do place faith: and we say, that faith apprehendeth Jesus Christ, who is the form which adorneth and furnisheth faith as the colour adorneth and beautifieth the wall. Christian faith, therefore, is not an idle quality or empty husk in the heart, which may be in deadly sin until charity come and quicken it; but, if it be true faith, it is a sure trust and confidence of the heart, and a firm consent whereby Christ is apprehended. So that Christ is the object of faith, yea rather, even in faith Christ himself is present. Faith, therefore, is a certain obscure knowledge, or rather darkness which seeth nothing: and yet, Christ apprehended by faith sitteth in this darkness, like as God at Sinai and in the temple sat in the midst of darkness, (Exod. xix. 9. 1 Kings viii. 10.) Wherefore, our formal righteousness is not charity beautifying and furnishing faith, but it is faith itself, which is as it were a certain loud in our hearts: that is to say, a steadfast trust and confidence in the thing which we see not, which is Christ: who, although he be not seen at all, yet is he present.

Faith therefore justifieth, because it apprehendeth

and possesseth this treasure, even Christ present. But this presence cannot be comprehended of us, because it is in darkness as I have said. Wherefore, where assured trust and affiance of the heart is, there Christ is present; yea even in the cloud and obscurity of faith. And this is the true formal righteousness whereby a man is justified, and not by charity as the Popish schoolmen do most wickedly affirm.

To conclude, like as the schoolmen say that charity furnisheth and adorneth faith, so do we say, that it is Christ which furnisheth and adorneth faith; or rather, that he is the very form and perfection of faith. Wherefore, Christ apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, is the true Christian righteousness for the which God counteth us righteous and giveth us eternal life. Here is no work of the law, no charity, but a far other manner of righteousness, and a certain new world beyond and above the law. For Christ or faith is not the law, nor the work of the law!

FAITH STANDING IN THE POWER OF GOD.

I PETER I.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith.

We (saith he) in hope wait for that glorious inheritance into which we have come by faith. For these things take place in this order.— Faith is begotten by the word; our new-birth is by this faith; and by this new-birth we are translated into that hope; wherein, we with certainty wait for those good things, being fully assured of them. Wherefore, Peter here properly saith, that these things come through faith, not through our own works.

Moreover, Peter here significantly saith that we are “kept by the power of God unto salvation.” For there are many, who, having heard the Gospel, that faith only justifies without works, immediately rush forward and say, ‘And we too believe:’ imagining, that the fancy which they form out to themselves, is faith. Whereas we

have taught, and that out of the scriptures, that it is not in our own power to do even the least works without the Spirit of God. How then shall we arrogate to ourselves the power of doing that by our own powers which is the greatest of all works—to believe? Such cogitations as these, therefore, are mere figments and dreams. The power of God must be present with us, which may work in us, as Paul sets it forth in the Ephesians, chap. i. “God gave unto you the Spirit of wisdom, that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power,” &c. For it is not only of the will of God, but of a certain power, that we believe: for such is this mighty concern, that, to create faith in any one, is a work of no less moment than it was to create heaven and earth.

Hence, it is manifest that those know not what they say, who say, How is it that faith can do all things, seeing that, many believe who do no good work whatever? For they imagine that their dream is faith, and that faith can exist without good works. We however say with Peter that faith is the power of God: and in whomsoever God works this faith, he is born again and comes forth a new creature; and then, from this faith, there follows, naturally, nothing but good works. Wherefore, it is without cause that you say to a Christian do this or that good work; because, without any commanding, he does nothing but work good works spontaneously. All that he requires is to be admonished, that he deceive not himself with that false and fictitious faith. Therefore, away with these empty vain talkers who have plenty of prating about those things which are nothing but a froth and vanity of words: concerning whom Paul saith, 1 Cor. iv. “I will come unto you, and will know not the words of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God standeth not in word but in power.” Where this power of God is wanting, there, neither true faith, nor any good works exist. Wherefore, they are open liars, who boast of the name and faith of Christ, and yet, nevertheless live a repro-

bate life. For undoubtedly, if the power of God wert upon them, they must be different persons.

But what does Peter mean when he saith, "Who are kept by the power of God unto salvation?"—That this faith, which the power of God, (which is present with us, and of which we are full,) works in us, is a matter so excellent and so great, that by it, we have a clear and certain knowledge of all those things which pertain unto salvation, and are able by it to judge and freely pronounce sentence on all things which are in the world. This doctrine is pure, the other false; this life is acceptable, the other reprobate; this working is good, the other evil. And whatsoever a man of this kind determinately declares, it is so, and is truth. For he cannot be deceived, but is preserved and kept by the power of God, and stands a judge of all doctrine.

On the other hand, where faith and the power of God are wanting, there is nothing but error and blindness. There reason is driven, now to this work, now to that: because it is imagining to ascend into heaven by its own works, and is ever thinking thus:—Behold this shall bring thee to heaven! Do this and thou shalt certainly be made partaker of felicity. Hence it is that those numberless floods of colleges, monasteries, altars, priesthoods, and monkeries, have spread themselves over the world. Into such blindness does God permit them to fall who do not believe. Whereas, in us who believe he keeps a sound mind in all things, that we might not be damned under this blindness, but might attain unto salvation.

HOW TO MEDITATE UPON AND APPLY THE DEATH AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS. i. 4.

Who gave himself for our sins.

Paul, in a manner, in every word handleth the argument of this Epistle. He hath nothing in his mouth but Christ, and therefore in every word there is a fer-

vency of spirit and life. And mark how well and to the purpose he speaketh. He saith not, who hath received our works at our hands, nor who hath received the sacrifices of Moses's law, worshippings, religions, masses, vows, and pilgrimages, but "hath given." What? Not gold, nor silver, nor beasts, nor paschal lambs, nor an angel, but "himself." For what? Not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for our holiness or righteousness, but "for our sins." These words are very thunder-claps from heaven against all kinds of righteousness. Like as is also this sentence of John, "Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Therefore we must with diligent attention mark every word of Paul, and not slenderly consider them or lightly pass them over, for they are full of consolation, and confirm fearful consciences exceedingly.

But how may we obtain remission of our sins? Paul answereth, that the man which is called Jesus Christ the Son of God, hath given himself for them. These are excellent and most comfortable words, and are promises of the whole law,—that our sins are taken away by none other mean than by the Son of God delivered unto death. With such gun-shot and such artillery must the Papacy be destroyed, and all the religions of the heathen, all works, all merits, and superstitious ceremonies. For if our sins may be taken away by our own works, merits, and satisfactions, what needed the Son of God to be given for them? But seeing he was given for them, it followeth, that we cannot put them away by our own works.

Again: by this sentence it is declared, that our sins are so great, so infinite and invincible, that it is impossible for the whole world to satisfy for one of them: and surely the greatness of the ransom, (namely, Christ the Son of God, who gave himself for our sins,) declareth sufficiently, that we can neither satisfy for sin, nor have dominion over it. The force and power of it is set forth and amplified exceedingly by these words, "who gave himself for our sins." Therefore, here is to be marked, the infinite greatness of the price bestowed for it; and

then will it appear evidently, that the power of it is so great that by no means it could be put away, but that the Son of God must needs be given for it. He that considereth these things, well understandeth, that this word **SIN** comprehendeth God's everlasting wrath and the whole kingdom of Satan, and that it is a thing more horrible than can be expressed; which ought to move us and make us afraid indeed. But we are careless, yea, we make light of sin and a matter of nothing, which although it bring with it a sting and remorse of conscience, yet notwithstanding, we think it not to be of such weight and force, but that by some little work or merit we may put it away. This sentence therefore witnesseth, that all men are servants and bond-slaves of sin, and, (as Paul saith in another place,) "sold under sin." And again, that sin is a most cruel and mighty tyrant over all men; which cannot be vanquished by the power of any creatures, whether they be angels or men, but by the sovereign and infinite power of Jesus Christ, "who hath given himself for the same."

Furthermore this sentence setteth out to the consciences of all men which are terrified with the greatness of their sins, a singular comfort. For albeit sin be never so invincible a tyrant, yet notwithstanding, for as much as Christ hath overcome it through his death, it cannot hurt them that believe in him. Moreover, if we arm ourselves with this belief, and cleave with all our hearts unto this man Jesus Christ, then is there a light opened and a sound judgment given unto us, so as we may most certainly and freely judge of all kinds of life. For when we hear that sin is such an invincible tyrant, thus, incontinent, by as necessary consequence we infer,—then, what do Papists, Monks, Nuns, Priests, Mahometists, Anabaptists, and all such as trust in their works, which will abolish and overcome sin by their own traditions, works preparative, satisfactions, &c.? Here forthwith we judge all those sects to be wicked and pernicious: whereby the glory of God and of Christ is not only defaced, but also utterly taken away, and our own advanced and established.

But weigh diligently every word of Paul; and especially, mark well the pronoun **OUR**; for the effect altogether consisteth in the well applying of the pronouns which we find often in the scriptures; wherein also here is some vehemency and power. Thou wilt easily say and believe, that Christ the Son of God was given for the sins of Peter, of Paul, and of other saints whom we account to have been worthy of this grace. But it is a very hard thing that thou, which judgest thyself unworthy of this grace, shouldest from thy heart say and believe, that Christ was given for thine invincible, infinite, and horrible sins. Therefore, generally, and without the pronoun, it is an easy matter to magnify and amplify the benefit of Christ; namely, that Christ was given for sins, but for other men's sins which are worthy. But when it cometh to the putting to of this pronoun **OUR**, here our weak nature and reason starteth back, and dare not come near unto God, nor promise to herself that so great a treasure should be truly given unto her; and therefore, she will not have to do with God except first she be pure and without sin. Wherefore, although she hear or read this sentence, "Who gave himself for our sins," or such like, yet doth she not apply this pronoun **OUR** unto herself, but unto others which are worthy and holy; and as for herself, she will tarry till she be made worthy by her own works.

This then is nothing else but that man's reason fain would, that sin were of no greater force and power than she herself dreameth it to be. Hereof it cometh, that hypocrites, being ignorant of Christ, although they feel the remorse of sin, do think notwithstanding, that they shall be able easily to put it away by their good works and merits; and secretly in their hearts they wish, that these words, "Who gave himself for our sins," were it as words spoken in humility; and would have their sins not to be true and very sins indeed, but light and small matters. To be short, man's reason would fain bring and present to God a feigned and counterfeit sinner, which is nothing afraid nor hath any feeling of sin. It would bring him that is whole, and not

him that hath need of a physician : and when it feeleth no sin, then it would believe that Christ was given for our sins.

The whole world is thus affected : and especially, they that would be counted more holy and religious than others, as monks and justiciaries. These confess with their mouth that they are sinners, and they confess also that they commit sins daily ; howbeit, not so great and many, but that they are able to put them away by their own works. Yea, and besides all this, they will bring their righteousness and deserts to Christ's judgment-seat, and demand the recompence of eternal life for them at the judge's hand. In the meanwhile, notwithstanding, (as they pretend great humility,) because they will not vaunt themselves to be utterly devoid of sin, they feign certain sins, that for the forgiveness thereof they may with great devotion pray with the publican, " God be merciful to me a sinner." Unto them these words of St. Paul, " for our sins," seem to be but light and trifling : therefore, they neither understand them, nor in temptation, when they feel sin indeed, can they take any comfort of them, but are compelled flatly to despair.

This is then the chief knowledge and true wisdom of Christians, — to count these words of Paul, that Christ was delivered to death, not for our righteousness, or holiness, but " for our sins," (which are very sins indeed, great, many, yea infinite, invincible,) to be most true, effectual, and of great importance. Therefore, think them not to be small and such as may be done away by thine own works ; neither yet despair thou for the greatness of them, if thou feel thyself oppressed therewith either in life or death ; but learn here of Paul to believe that Christ was given, not for feigned or counterfeit sins, nor yet for small sins, but for great and huge sins : not for one or two, but for all : not for vanquished sins (for no man, no nor angel is able to overcome the least sin that is) but for invincible sins. And except thou be found in the number of those that say " our sins ;" that is, which have this doctrine of faith, and teach, hear,

learn, love, and believe the same, there is no salvation for thee!

Labour therefore diligently, that not only out of the time of temptation, but also in the danger and conflict of death, when thy conscience is thoroughly afraid with the remembrance of thy sins past, and the devil assail-eth thee with great violence, going about to overwhelm thee with heaps, floods, and whole seas of sins, to terrify thee, to draw thee from Christ, and to drive thee to despair; that then, I say, thou mayest be able to say with sure confidence, 'Christ the Son of God was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners. If I were righteous and had no sin, I should have no need of Christ to be my reconciler. Why then, O thou peevish, holy Satan, wilt thou make me to be holy, and to seek righteousness in myself, when in very deed I have nothing in me but sins and most grievous sins? not feigned or trifling sins, but such as are against the first table; to wit, great infidelity; doubting; despair; contempt of God; hatred; ignorance, and blaspheming of God; unthankfulness; abusing of God's name; neglecting, loathing, and despising the word; and such like. And moreover, these carnal sins against the second table; as not to yield honour to my parents; not to obey the magistrates; to covet other men's goods, his wife, and such like: albeit that these be light faults in respect of those former sins. And admit that I have not committed murder, whoredom, theft, and such other sins against the second table, in fact; yet, I have committed them in heart; and therefore I am a transgressor of all God's commandments, and the multitude of my sins is so great that they cannot be numbered; for I have sinned above the number of the sand of the sea.'

Besides this, Satan is such a cunning juggler, that he can make of my righteousness and good works, great sins. For so much then as my sins are so weighty, so infinite, so horrible and invincible; and that my righteousness doth nothing further me, but rather hinder me before God; therefore, Christ the Son of God was given to death for them to put them away, and so save all men

which believe. Herein, therefore, consisteth the effect of eternal salvation : namely, in taking these words to be effectual, true, and of great importance. I say not this for nought, for I have oftentimes proved by experience, and I daily find, what an hard matter it is to believe, (especially in the conflict of conscience,) that Christ was given, not for the holy, righteous, worthy, and such as were his friends ; but for wicked sinners, for the unworthy, and for his enemies which have deserved God's wrath and everlasting death.

Let us, therefore, arm ourselves with these and such like sentences of the holy scripture, that we may be able to answer the devil, (accusing us and saying thou art a sinner, and therefore thou art damned,) in this sort.— Because thou sayest I am a sinner, therefore will I be righteous and saved. Nay (saith the devil) thou shalt be damned. No (say I) for I fly unto Christ “ who hath given himself for my sins ;” therefore, Satan, thou shalt not prevail against me in that thou goest about to terrify me in setting forth the greatness of my sins, and so to bring me into heaviness, distrust, despair, hatred, contempt, and blaspheming of God. Yea rather, in that thou sayest I am a sinner, thou givest me armour and weapon against thyself, that with thine own sword I may cut thy throat and tread thee under my feet: for Christ died for sinners. Moreover, thou thyself preachest unto me the glory of God ; for thou puttest me in mind of God's fatherly love towards me a wretched and damned sinner ; “ who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Also as often as thou objectest that I am a sinner, so often thou callest me to remembrance of the benefit of Christ my Redeemer ; upon whose shoulders, and not upon mine, lie all my sins ; for, “ The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all ;” again, “ For the transgression of his people was he smitten.” Wherefore, when thou sayest I am a sinner, thou dost not terrify me, but comfort me above measure.

Whoso knoweth this one point of cunning well, shall

easily avoid all the engines and snares of the devil ; who by putting man in mind of his sins, driveth him to despair and destroyeth him ; unless he withstand him with his cunning and with this heavenly wisdom, whereby only, sin, death, and the devil, are overcome. But the man that putteth not away the remembrance of his sin, but keepeth it still and tormenteth himself with his own cogitations, thinking either to help himself by his own strength and policy, or to tarry the time until his conscience may be quieted, falleth into Satan's snares, and miserably afflicteth himself, and at length is overcome with the continuance of the temptations : for the devil will never cease to accuse his conscience.

Against this temptation we must use these words of Paul, in the which he giveth a very true definition of Christ in this manner.—Christ is the Son of God and of the Virgin, delivered and put to death for our sins. Here, if the devil allege any other definition of Christ, say thou, The definition and the thing defined are false ; therefore, I will not receive this definition. I speak not this without cause ; for I know what moveth me to be so earnest that we should learn to define Christ out of the words of Paul. For indeed Christ is no cruel exactor, but a forgiver of the sins of the whole world. Wherefore, if thou be a sinner, (as indeed we are all,) set not Christ down upon the rainbow as a judge, (for so shalt thou be terrified and despair of his mercy,) but take hold of his true definition ; namely, that Christ the Son of God and the Virgin, is a person, not that terrifieth, not that afflicteth, not that condemneth us of sin, not that demandeth an account of us for our lives evilly past, but that “ hath given himself for our sins,” and, with one oblation, hath put away the sins of the whole world, hath fastened them upon the cross, and put them clean out by himself.

Learn this definition diligently ; and especially, so exercise this pronoun *our*, that this one syllable being believed may swallow up all thy sins ; that is to say, that thou mayest know assuredly that Christ hath taken away the sins, not of certain men only, but also of thee,

and of the whole world. Then let not thy sins be sin's, but even thy own sins indeed: that is, to wit, believe thou that Christ was not only given for other men's sins, but also for thine. Hold this fast, and suffer not thyself by any means to be drawn away from this sweet definition of Christ, which rejoiceth even the very angels in heaven; that is to say, that Christ, according to the proper and true definition, is no Moses, no lawgiver, no tyrant, but a mediator for sins, a free giver of grace, righteousness, and life, who gave himself, not for our merits, holiness, righteousness, and godly life, but "for our sins." Indeed, Christ doth interpret the law, but that is not his proper and principal office.

These things as touching the words we know well enough, and can talk of them, but in practice and in conflict, when the devil goeth about to deface Christ, and to pluck the word of grace out of our hearts, we find that we do not yet know them well and as we should do. He that, at that time, could define Christ truly, and could magnify him and behold him as his most sweet Saviour and High-Priest, and not as a strict judge, this man had overcome all evils, and were already in the kingdom of heaven. But this to do in the conflict, is of all things the most hard. I speak this by experience. For I know the devil's subtleties; who, at one time, not only goeth about to fear us with the terror of the law, yea and also of a little mote maketh many beams; that is to say, of that which is no sin he maketh a very hell, (for he is marvellous crafty both in aggravating sin and in puffing up the conscience even in good works,) but also is wont to fear us with the very person of the Mediator; into the which he transformeth himself, and laying before us some place of the scripture, or some saying of Christ, suddenly he striketh our hearts, and sheweth himself unto us in such sort, as if he were Christ indeed; leaving us sticking so fast in that cogitation, that our conscience would swear it were the same Christ whose saying he alleged. Moreover, such is the subtlety of the enemy, that he will not set before us Christ entirely and wholly, but a piece of Christ only,

namely that he is the Son of God, and man born of the Virgin; and by-and-by, patcheth there some other thing; that is to say, some saying of Christ wherewith he terrifieth the impenitent sinner, such as that in the 13th of Luke, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and so, corrupting the true definition of Christ with his poison, he bringeth to pass, that albeit we believe him to be Christ the true Mediator, yet in very deed our troubled conscience feeleth and judgeth him to be a tyrant and a judge. Thus, we being deceived by Satan, do easily lose the sweet sight of our High-Priest and Saviour Christ: which being once lost, we shun him no less than the devil himself.

And this is the cause, why I do so earnestly call upon you to learn the true and proper definition of Christ out of these words of Paul, "who gave himself for our sins." If he gave himself to death for our sins, then undoubtedly he is no tyrant or judge, which will condemn us for our sins; he is no caster down of the afflicted, but a raiser up of those that are fallen; a merciful reliever and comforter of the heavy and broken-hearted. Else should Paul lie in saying, "who gave himself for our sins." If I define Christ thus, I define him rightly, and take hold of the true Christ and possess him indeed. And here, I let pass all curious speculations touching the divine Majesty, and I stay myself in the humanity of Christ; and so, I learn truly to know the will of God. Here is then no fear, but altogether sweetness, joy, peace of conscience, and such like. And here withal there is a light opened, which sheweth me the true knowledge of God, of myself, and of all creatures, and all the iniquities of the devil's kingdom. We teach no new thing, but we repeat and establish old things which the apostles and all godly teachers have taught before us. And would to God we could so teach and establish them, that we might not only have them in our mouth, but also well-grounded in the bottom of our heart; and especially, that we may be able to use them in the agony and conflict of death.

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

MATTHEW xii.

There are six sins against the Holy Ghost : which, although they be essentially the same, yet differ in their actings, or rather in their sinful workings.—Presumption, fighting against the known truth, obstinacy, desperation, envy of the grace in a brother, and final impenitency.

These act or work thus.—In the time of security and peace, presumption, fighting against the truth, and obstinacy : in the time of soul-straits and trouble, desperation, envy, and impenitency.

1. The reprobate, in the time of security, is confident and presumptuous ; and seems sure that he in his works please God, and will be righteous as he is in himself, as the pharisees.

2. If he be reproved, he grows proud, and resists the truth which makes against him ; and although he knows it is the truth, yet he will not cease from his presumption ; and thus, he fights against the known truth.

3. He obstinately perseveres in this presumption and fighting ; and thus, dies in his sins hardened, seared, and incorrigible.—On the other hand

1. The reprobate when they begin to feel the wrath of God, they at once, like Cain and Judas, despair, and do not believe that their sins are pardoned ; but imagine, that their sin is greater than the grace of God.

2. When they see, that they are rejected, they envy all men their salvation ; and would that no one were saved, but that all should perish with themselves.

3. They persevere in this envy and desperation, and will not suffer themselves to be converted. And as obstinacy is a certain final impenitency in the time of security ; that is, in presumption and fighting against the truth ; so, final impenitency is a certain obstinacy in the time of soul-straits, that is, in desperation, envy, &c.

CHRIST DELIGHTING IN THE BEAUTY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM xlv. 11.

So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.

This is a most sweet promise. For the Holy Spirit knoweth that this monster, Monk, sticks fast in our heart, —that we want to be pure and without spot before God. Thus, under Popery, all my temptation was this. I used to say ‘that I would willingly go to the sacrament if I were but worthy.’ Thus we seek, naturally, a purity in ourselves; and we examine our whole life and want to find a purity in ourselves, that we might have no need of grace, but might be pronounced righteous upon the rounds of our own merit. This inclination is rooted in our flesh; and the Holy Spirit knows that we wish for beauty in ourselves. And hence, when we would pray, we think thus, ‘willingly would I pray, but I am not worthy that God should hear me.’

These cogitations come from that monstrous monk, of whom I have spoken before,) that dwells in our own hearts, and intoxicates our conscience with a looking on our own worthiness, and a desiring not to pray before we are better. But thus, it will come to pass that thou wilt never pray, if thou wilt wait until thou art worthy. For if it be required that we be first righteous, why do we pray in the Lord’s prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses?” Rather, when thou feelest that thou art a sinner and unfit to pray, thou shouldst then go the most to prayer and to the sacrament. For in what other way wouldst thou become righteous, but by the Word and Sacrament? Thou wilt certainly never become righteous by thyself and thine own works. Thus, there is in us all this pestilent reasoning of our own monk, that we are always looking for our own purity.

The Holy Spirit saith, therefore, I will give thee wholesome counsel; and if thou wilt hear me, thou shalt become a virgin all fair. For, if thou wouldst be beautiful

in the sight of God, so that all thy works should please him, and he should say, 'Thy prayer pleaseth me; all that thou sayest, doest, and thinkest pleaseth me;' proceed thou thus;—"hear, see, and incline thine ear;" and thou shalt thus become all fair. When thou hast heard, hast seen, hast forgotten all thine own righteousness, all the law, all traditions, and all that monkery, and hast believed, then art thou fair; not in thine own beauty, but in the beauty of the King who has adorned thee with his Word; because, he has brought unto thee thereby his righteousness, his holiness, truth, and fortitude, and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But here, first of all, our own reasoning deceives us; which the monk that is born with us still retains; and which sticks close to our flesh and conscience. And next, the efficacy of the Word; for, because it is preached in common, and seems to have no conspicuous appearance, therefore, we do not think that we are sufficiently adorned when we have the Word only; when we are baptized, have partaken of the Lord's Supper, and are called by the Gospel. This adorning we do not think to be the highest ornament, as to appearance, because it is vile, and as it appears, common to all. For, say the Anabaptists, what adorning is it to be wetted with water?—It is thus that fleshly eyes judge! But, if thou look at baptism with spiritual eyes, thou wilt see, that baptism clothes thee with the adorning of Christ. And what better and more precious adorning wouldst thou wish for, than that with which Christ is adorned himself, and adorns his disciples?

Thus, the Holy Spirit declares, that we are to be made beautiful by a beauty not our own. When (saith he) thou hast heard, hast believed, and hast forgotten thine own righteousness, so that thou desirest to know nothing wherein to trust but the adorning of the bridegroom Christ, then shalt thou be truly beautiful, and "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." But what do we? Directly the contrary! We go back to our father's house, which he commands us to forget. Ah! (say we) I am a sinner. I want to become worthy

and pure before I go to this bridegroom. And what is this, but going back to our father's house, wishing to bring with us that righteousness which he commands us to let go, and sending for that monk? But thou oughtest to say thus.—I know nothing about that worthiness: I care not whether I am worthy or unworthy: those things are all old and gone by. If I be outwardly unworthy as to the second table, be it so: that is my filthiness. Yet, internally, I am beautiful by an adorning not my own. By that I am most holy, and am beautifully adorned; because, the King loveth that beauty; seeing that, I hear the Word, forget my monk, and believe in Christ my King—that I am redeemed by his blood, and justified by his merit.

Where there is this faith, whatever I do afterward pleases him: and he delights in my beauty which he himself has put upon me. Therefore, I am not to doubt at all that I am all fair, and that all things which I do greatly please God for Christ's sake, whom I apprehend by faith as my Redeemer. So that, when I open my mouth to teach, or to pray, I am to believe that all the angels smile and rejoice; and he who hears me is to know, that he offers a sacrifice of the sweetest savour unto God. This is the experience to which we must arrive. This is to forget our father's house and people;—to be persuaded of the present righteousness of faith, in opposition to the old righteousness of works; and then it will come to pass, that we shall be most acceptable unto God.

But the Holy Spirit uses the most exalted language, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty:" that is, thou wilt by this faith prevail upon him to do whatever thou desirest: so that, as one urged by the power of love, we will spontaneously follow thee, abide with thee, and take up his abode with thee. For wherever God has given his Word, there he does not leave his work which he has begun in thee; but he brings upon thee first the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh; that by them he may work upon thee. These are his embraces whereby he embraceth his spouse

through impatience of love. Because, if we were without temptations, we should not seek him; we should not learn "to hear, see, and incline our ear." He therefore drives us, that we may the more earnestly cleave to the Word, and believe in him; and this he does, from his great love of us. But these embraces are so sweet to our flesh, that they often press tears from us! Yet they do us good.

These consolations, therefore, are exceedingly great if we could, not being afraid of their magnitude, embrace them.—That our King Christ not only takes pleasure in the Word and in faith; but that, with a love like that of a bridegroom toward his bride, he so hangs over us and is drawn towards us, that he spontaneously follows us. Such influence have we over him if we do but hear the Word, believe, and forget our own righteousness. But it is a difficult matter! May God only give us grace to enter into these things in doctrine, and in the ministry of the Word, and the symbols; and, in a degree, in our experience also; and as we have begun, may we learn to forget this monk, that he may at least not reign in us as he does in the Sacramentarians, the Anabaptists, and the Papists; whom this monk has so devoured altogether, that they are nothing but shaven monks. From which pestilence, may God in mercy save us. Amen!

The sum of the whole therefore is this.—That our beauty does not consist in our own virtues, nor even in the gifts which we have received from God, by which we put forth virtues and do all those things which pertain unto the life of the law. But in this:—our apprehending Christ and believing in him. Then it is that we are truly beautiful: and it is this beauty alone that Christ looks upon, and upon no other. Therefore, to teach that we should desire to become beautiful by religions of our own choosing, and by our own righteousness, amounts to nothing. Among men, indeed, and in the courts of great men, such things are beautiful; but in the courts of God, we must be arrayed in another beauty! There, the one and only beauty is, believing in

the Lord Jesus Christ! He it is that blots out all our blemishes and wrinkles, and makes us acceptable unto God. This faith is a thing omnipotent, a beauty the most fair; besides which, there is no beauty. For out of, and without Christ, we are damned and lost, together with all that we have and all that we are!

CHRIST'S PEOPLE ALL RIGHTEOUS.

ISAIAH lx. 21.

Thy people shall be all righteous.

THIS is a glorious text,—that all who are in the Church, that is, who believe in Christ crucified, are “righteous.” But we must define what this righteousness is; for if you look at the life and walk of Christians, you will find many things which will offend you. They often sin, they often err, they often, through infirmity, are overcome by trifling things; all which seems to make against righteousness.

Righteousness then before God, is not the doing or suffering this or that, but the being illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and the knowing and confessing that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, who by his death, has redeemed us from death and sin. This righteousness is held forth in the Word, and is received by faith alone: which faith closes with the Word, and the man believes that he, by the death and merits of Christ, is righteous.

But this faith is no light thing. For it is impossible that the Gospel can be believed, without a divine power. And even those who have received the Holy Spirit, cannot hold fast this faith without the greatest conflicts. And the cause thereof is, that this righteousness is a thing invisible, which we are not to feel, but only to believe. But, because our flesh is corrupt and often falls into sins, our minds cannot, without a great deal of trying exercise, raise themselves up to believe, contrary to our present sense of sin, that we are righteous, not by our own righteousness, (for that under all these sins and infirmities is brought to nothing,) but by the

righteousness of Christ; who therefore was made righteousness unto us, and sacrificed for our sins upon the cross, because it was impossible unto us to fulfil the law.

The mind must, therefore, be exercised to know, that its righteousness is out of itself, and treasured up in Christ. Otherwise, how could it stand in the judgment of God, seeing that we sin continually? If therefore thou hast sinned, and thy conscience bites thee, here thou oughtest to have firm faith, and to overcome sin through Christ and say,—Although I have sinned, yet I am righteous; because, I have for my light the Lord himself; because, I have Christ in whom there is no guilt of sin.

And that the righteousness of Christ is thine, thou hast the most weighty testimonies. First, the word of God itself; which saith that Christ died for thee. Again, thou hast baptism; for we are all baptized into his death, which he underwent for us. Thou hast also the sacrament of the altar; in which, by clear words and by an external sign, he confirms that his body was delivered for thee, and that his blood was shed for thee.

This therefore is our righteousness whereby we are righteous before God: it is without us afar off, placed far beyond all our own works and imaginations. Wherefore, we are deceived, if we make ourselves to be either righteous or unrighteous from our own works: for we ought to feel and confess, that we are righteous by a confidence in the death of Christ. They who do not this, do an injury to Christ, and make their sins to be greater than the death and innocent passion of Christ. Moreover, they deny the word of God and the sacrament, the signs of grace.

This, nevertheless, is true; that, with respect to thyself and thy “old man,” thou sayest rightly that thou art a sinner: (for as much of flesh and blood as there is remaining in thee, so much sin hast thou remaining;) but because thou art baptized and illuminated by the Spirit, with respect to this “new man,” thou art truly righteous. But for as much as baptism, the sacra-

ment of the altar, the word of God, nay Christ himself, are things that are placed without thee; so also, thy righteousness is placed without thee: therefore, the private sins of our flesh cannot destroy it. For the prophet saith that our sun is eternal: therefore, our righteousness is eternal, and not to be overcome by temporal sins. It is not pride for a man to say that he is righteous: nay, to say the contrary, and to believe in thine heart that thou art not righteous, is to deny Christ and to blaspheme the name of Christ, who gave himself to be our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i.

NEW-BORN BABES IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST, AND THEIR TASTING THE GRACIOUS SAVOUR OF THE GOSPEL.

1 PETER ii. 2.

As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.

Here, the simile which he adduces, is this.—Ye are newly born by the word of God; wherefore, be ye like unto new-born babes: that is, they desire nothing but milk. As therefore they desire the breasts, and milk; so ought ye to desire the word, and be carried out in longings after it with all the heart; and to believe, that all the dainties which it contains, are there treasured up for you, that ye may suck out milk, sincere, and pure from all deceit.

These are figurative words. For he does not speak of corporal milk; even as he does not speak of a corporal sucking, or a corporal birth. But he is speaking here of another milk which is "sincere," that is, spiritual; which is imbibed by the soul and sucked out by the heart. This milk should be pure from deceit, for corrupted wares are often sold. It is, however, a matter of great moment, and utterly necessary, that to new-born and infant Christians, sincere and uncorrupt milk should

be given. This milk is nothing else than the Gospel itself, which is also the very seed of which we are conceived and born, as we have observed before : and the same is also the food by which we are fed after we have grown up : it is also the armour with which we are furnished and equipped. And what farther shall I say? This same Gospel is every thing to us. And that which, being mingled, corrupts this sincerity, is the doctrine of men. Wherefore it is, that the Holy Spirit here gives an admonition, that every one of those who are born again in Christ, should look well to the kind of milk which he sucks, and should himself learn to judge of every kind of doctrine.

The breasts also which give forth this milk, and which the infants suck, are those who teach in the church of Christ. Hence, the bridegroom says to the bride in Cant. iv., "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins." Between these, ought to hang the bundle of myrrh ; as the bride saith Cant. i. "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Which signifies, that Christ only, is always to be preached. This spouse ought always to be betwixt the breasts. Otherwise, if Christ be not purely preached, the milk is corrupted and all things are preposterous and pernicious.

And this preaching is pure, where it is preached as the chief thing of all, that Christ gave himself to death for us, and by it plucked and delivered us from sin, death, and hell : this is fruitful preaching, and, as it were, sweet milk. But by-and-by also, the cross must be preached : namely, that we must suffer as he also suffered : this, is strong drink, and pure wine. Therefore, to the new-born babes in Christ, softer food must first be given ; that is, milk must be administered. This cannot be done more conveniently than by preaching unto them first, and before all things, Christ ; who is by no means harsh, and nothing but sweet and rich grace ; wherein, there is nothing that can hurt, nothing that can grieve. And this is that true milk, sincere, and pure from deceit.

And again, by "milk" here, Peter has reference to the scriptures, which he quotes most abundantly. The Lord commanded, Exod. xxiii. and Deut. xiv. "Thou shalt not dress a kid, while it is suckled by its mother." pray you for what cause did God command this to be written? Of what consequence was it if the kid were killed while it suckled? He doubtlessly commanded it, that it might signify that which Peter here teaches. Nor is it any thing else than if he had said, Take heed that you preach tender things, and by degrees, to new-born and weak Christians. Let them be well fed, and grow fat by the knowledge of Christ. Do not overload them with strong doctrine : for, by reason of their tender age, they are not able to bear it. But by-and-by, when they are grown up and have gained some strength, then kill them and sacrifice them on the cross.

To the same purpose is that caution which we read Deut. xxiv.—That the new married husband ought not to be forced to go to war in the first year, lest he should be slain : but ought to remain at home and delight himself in his new-married wife. Nor does this signify anything else, but that we should for a time indulge those who are yet babes in the faith of Christ, and treat them tenderly, until they be grown stronger : whom, by-and-by, when they are grown up, the Lord will bring to the cross, and take care that they shall be slain like other Christians : and then, the kid shall be killed.

That ye may grow thereby : if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

It is by no means enough to have heard the Gospel once : it must be inculcated continually, that by it we may grow. According to every one's strength of faith, so he ought to be looked after, and so he ought to be fed. But as for those who have not yet heard the Gospel, do not imagine that these things are spoken to them : they know not what this milk, or this wine is : and therefore, the apostle adds, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." As though he had said, He who has not tasted this, such an one cannot understand this thing in

his heart, nor know that its taste is sweet. But those who have tasted it, such are always dwelling upon this food, even the word; they know what the taste of it is, and they are acquainted with its marvellous sweetness.

This *tasting*, is, when I believe in my heart that Christ gave himself for me, and put himself in my stead: and that now, all my sins and all my destruction are his, and his life mine. When that is taken up and entered into by the heart, its taste is wonderfully sweet: for how can it be that I should not be anointed with joy and pleasure at this, if I rejoice so much when any friend gives me only a hundred pounds? But he who does not take up this in his heart, he cannot be affected with any joy concerning it. Moreover, they taste the most of these things, who are exercised with the burthen of death, or are tormented with an unhealed conscience: to them, as the proverb saith, ‘hunger is the best sauce:’ that hunger, renders this food wonderfully savory. For the heart and conscience, when they have begun to feel their plagues, can hear of nothing so sweet as the Gospel: they are always longing for this; they can smell the savor of it afar off: and they can never be satisfied with it. Thus Mary sings, “He filleth the hungry with good things.” Whereas those obstinate men, who live upon their own holiness, and lean upon their own works, and feel nothing of their sins, and plagues, taste nothing of these things. So when a hungry man sits down to the table, all the dishes have to him a savoury taste; but he who has already eaten to the full, has no relish for their savouriness at all; nay, even the most delicious meats are to him disgustful. Therefore, the apostle saith, “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” As though he had said, If ye have not yet tasted this, my preaching these things to you is all in vain.

TRUE FAITH, TRUE OBEDIENCE, AND TRUE HOLINESS.

I PETER i. 1-3.

Hope with all confidence in the grace which is offered unto you by the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children.

The nature of Christian faith, is, to trust to the word of God with all reliance, to commit itself unto the word with all safety, and to undertake whatever is required with all confidence. And therefore Peter saith, then are the loins of your mind girded up, then is your faith sound and sincere, when you do what you do with this full reliance upon the word of God; not regarding what will be endangered that belongs to you, whether your property, your fame, your body, or even your life. And therefore, he has in these words beautifully described sincere, and truly unfeigned faith. For faith must not be indolent and sleepy, which would rather be a dream than faith, but it must be lively and efficacious: so that the man may expose himself to all things with all confidence, resting wholly on the word, not in the least regarding what kind of a portion God shall allot to him, but undergoing with the same mind both adversity and prosperity. Thus, if I am to die, it behoves me to commit myself with all confidence unto Christ, to offer my neck freely, relying upon the word which cannot deceive me, and boldly to triumph over the powers of my adversaries. Moreover, it is necessary that faith go right on, and suffer not itself to be hindered or terrified by any thing, but cast away all opposition which it may either hear, see, or feel. In a word, Peter requires such a faith as standeth not in imagination, nor in word, but in power.

Moreover, Peter saith, “Hope in the grace which is offered unto you:” that is, ye did not merit this great grace, but it is offered unto you wholly free. For the Gospel, which proclaims this grace unto us, we never

found out or thought of ourselves, but the Holy Spirit revealed it unto the world from heaven. And what is there offered unto us? Even those things of which we have spoken already:—that he who believes in Christ, and cleaves to his word, partakes, together with him, of all his benefits: he is in truth the Lord over sin, death, the devil, and hell, and sure of eternal life! This immense treasure is, as the German proverb saith, brought to our mouths and put into our bosoms, without any working or merit of ours: nay, when we never expected, never knew, and never thought of any such thing. Wherefore, the apostle exhorts us to expect this grace with all assurance, because, God who offers it unto us, most certainly cannot lie.

By the revelation of Jesus Christ.

God offers his grace to no one but by Christ; wherefore, no mortal man can presume to come into his presence without this Mediator: this also we have shewn before. For he will hear no one but him who brings with him as an advocate Christ his well-beloved Son; he will only look on him; and, for his sake; those who cleave to him. Wherefore, he requires that we acknowledge his Son, as him through whose blood we are received into his favour, and now dare to appear before him. Because it was for this that Christ the Lord came into the world, and, having assumed flesh and blood, united himself unto us,—that he might obtain for us grace to appear before his Father. It was by this faith that all the prophets and patriarchs were preserved, and attained unto salvation. For they must all have had faith in that promise which was made unto Abraham, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Wherefore, the faith of the Jews, the Turks, and all those who trust in their own works, and hope by them to obtain heaven, is a nothing at all. And therefore Peter saith, that grace is offered unto us; but, by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Or, to set it forth more plainly, by Jesus Christ being revealed unto us. By the Gospel, it is declared unto us what Christ is, that

we might know him; namely, that he is our Saviour who takes away our sins; who delivers us from all evils; who reconciles us to his Father; and who makes us righteous and saved without any of our own works. He who does not know Christ thus, is manifestly deceived. For even if thou know that he is the Son of God who died and rose again, and now sitteth at the right hand of God, yet thou hast not known Christ aright, nor will this knowledge profit thee any thing: but it is necessary that thou know and believe, that he did all these things for *thy* salvation. Wherefore, all that they have hitherto preached and taught in the schools, is vain; because, they were destitute of this knowledge of Christ, and advanced no farther than discussing how much pain the Lord Christ's passion must have cost him before he could, as he now does, sit down at rest in heaven, and rejoice in himself: therefore their hearts remain utterly barren, and lively faith cannot grow therein. Whereas, Christ ought not to be preached as living and reigning for himself, but as being *ours*. Otherwise, what need was there for him to come down upon earth and shed his blood? But he was sent into the world that by him the world might be saved; which he himself saith, John chap. iii. was necessary, that he might accomplish that work which his Father sent him into the world to do. And that mission and coming is not to be understood of the divine nature only, but rather of the human nature, and of the office which Christ bore. For as soon as he was baptized he commenced his office, and began to do that for which he was sent, and for which he came into the world:—to preach the truth, and to declare unto men, that all who should believe in him should be saved. For this purpose, he shewed himself openly, studiously made himself known, and offered unto us grace in and through himself.

As obedient children.

That is, walk as becometh obedient children. *Obedience* in the scriptures means *faith*. But the Pope with his schools, and herds of monks have, by perverting this

word, warped and twisted, according to their own lies and vanities, every thing that is read in the scriptures concerning *obedience*. So, as soon as they saw that great passage, 1 Kings xv., "To obey is better than sacrifice," and found that obedience was so highly extolled in the scriptures, they laid hold of it in order to draw men into this error;—to think, that to do all that they should impose upon them, was the obedience which is so much commended in the scriptures. And thus, they would draw us from the word of God to their own lies and diabolical obediences! Whereas, he is the obedient child of God, who hears, and by faith embraces, the Gospel and word of God! Therefore, whatever is not the word, pay no regard to it, but rather tread it under thy feet!

Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Here St. Peter adduces a passage from the Old Testament, Levit. xix., where the Lord saith, "Be ye holy, for I am holy:" that is, because I am the Lord your God, and ye are my people, it is right that ye should be as I am. For he that rightly acts the part of a lord, studies to make his people like himself; that they may be obedient in all things, and ready to conform themselves to his will. Hence it is, that, as the Lord our God is holy, so also we his people are holy: that is, when we walk in faith. For the scripture by no means has to do with the saints that are dead, but always speaks of those saints which are alive, and are still upon the earth: even as the prophet David, Ps. lxxxvi. boasts that he is holy: saying, "Preserve thou my soul, O Lord, for I am holy."

But our wise ones pervert this passage also; saying, that the prophet had some peculiar revelation, and therefore, called himself "holy." Wherein they plainly confess, that they are both destitute of faith, and know nothing of the revelation of Christ; if it were not so, they would at once understand what it is. For whoever is a

Christian, knows that this revelation of Christ is in his own experience: and he who has not this experience is no Christian. For he that is a Christian, enters into communion with Christ and all his benefits. And hence, as Christ is holy, so he must be holy; or else, he must deny that Christ is holy. For if thou art baptized, thou hast put on the garment of holiness—which is, Christ: as Paul testifies.

This term “holy,” [saint,] signifies that which is made the peculiar property of God, and which belongs to him alone: which we commonly term, *consecrated*. Therefore, Peter here says, Ye have consecrated yourselves unto God, therefore, take heed that ye suffer not yourselves to be led away again into the lusts of the world; but yield yourselves unto God, that he may reign, live, and work in you; then shall ye be holy, even as he is holy!

Thus, hitherto, the Apostle has described and taught that grace which is offered unto us by the Gospel, and the preaching of Christ. And now, what does he teach us in consequence of this grace;—that we firmly persevere in a pure and sincere mind of faith; assured, that no work whatever that we can either do or think, can be of any avail unto our salvation. But when these things are preached, immediately this reasoning begins, and this conclusion is drawn:—Well! if this be the case, then there is no need for me to do any good at all! Thus, those thick-headed ones run away into such an opinion; (or shall I rather call it madness?) and, of the Christian life, make a state of carnal licentiousness; imagining, that they may do just what they list. These the Apostle Peter here opposes, and anticipates their foolish reasoning; teaching, that the Christian liberty and freedom from all works is to be used with respect to God only; for with respect to, and before him, I am to use faith only, without any works; that I may ascribe unto him the honour due unto his name, and may acknowledge him to be my God who is just, true, and merciful! It is this faith that sets us free from sin and all evils. But when I have rendered these things unto God, then, whatever portion of life I live afterwards, I

live to my neighbour, that I may serve him and do him good. The chiefest of all works that proceed from faith, is, that I confess Christ with my mouth, and bear a testimony for him with my blood; being ready to lay down my life for him, when it should be required of me. But still, God has no need even of this work: wherefore, we are to do this, only, that our faith may be proved and manifested, and may win others unto the faith. And moreover, other works follow; all of which must be directed to this end,—that by them I may serve my neighbour; all which works, nevertheless, God must work in us. Therefore nothing is our own—we can arrogate nothing unto ourselves.

**SAVING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND
HIS CRY OF ABBA FATHER IN THE HEART.
—A DESCRIPTION OF TRUE PRAYER.**

GALATIANS iv. 6.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.

The Holy Ghost is sent two manner of ways. In the primitive church, he was sent in a manifest and visible appearance. So he came upon Christ at Jordan in the likeness of a dove; (Matt. iii. 16,) and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers, (Acts ii. 3.) And this was the first sending of the Holy Ghost; which was necessary in the primitive church, for it was expedient that it should be established by many miracles because of the unbelievers; as Paul witnesseth—“Strange tongues, (saith he,) be for a sign and a token; not to them that believe; but to them that believe not,” (1 Cor. xix. 22.) But after that the church was gathered together and confirmed with those miracles, it was not necessary that this visible sending of the Holy Ghost should continue any longer.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost is sent by the word into the hearts of the believers; as here it is said, “God sent the Spirit of his Son,” &c. This sending is without any visible appearance; to wit, when by the hearing of

the external word, we receive an inward fervency and light, whereby we are changed and become new creatures ; whereby also, we receive a new judgment, a new feeling, and a new moving. This change, and this new judgment, is no work of reason or of the power of man, but is the gift and operation of the Holy Ghost, which cometh with the word preached, which purifieth our hearts by faith, and bringeth forth in us spiritual motions. Therefore, there is a great difference betwixt us and those, which, with force and subtilty, persecute the doctrine of the Gopel. For we, by the grace of God, can certainly judge by the word of the will of God towards us, also of all laws and doctrines, and of our own life and of the life of others. Contrariwise, the Papists and Sectaries cannot certainly judge of any thing. For they corrupt, they persecute, and blaspheme the Word. Now, without the Word, a man can give no certain judgment of any thing.

And although it appear not before the world that we be renewed in spirit, and have the Holy Ghost, yet notwithstanding, our judgment, our speech, and our confession, do declare sufficiently, that the Holy Ghost with his gifts is in us. For before, we could judge rightly of nothing : we spake not as now we do ; we confessed not that all our works were sin and damnable : that Christ was our only merit both before grace and after, as now we do in the true knowledge and light of the gospel. Wherefore, let this trouble us nothing at all that the world (whose works we testify to be evil) judgeth us to be most pernicious heretics and seditious persons, destroyers of religion and troublers of the common peace, possessed of the devil speaking in and governing all our actions. Against this perverse and wicked judgment of the world, let this testimony of our conscience be sufficient ; whereby we assuredly know, that it is the gift of God that we do not only believe in Jesus Christ, but that we also preach and confess him before the world. As we believe with our heart, so do we speak with our mouth, according to that saying of the Psalmist, " I believed, and therefore have I spoken," (Psalm cxvi. 10.)

Moreover, we exercise ourselves in the fear of God, and avoid sin as much as we may. If we sin, we sin not of purpose but of ignorance, and we are sorry for it. We may slip, for the devil lieth in wait for us both day and night. Also, the remnants of sin cleave yet fast in our flesh. Therefore, as touching the flesh, we are sinners, yea, after that we have received the Holy Ghost. And there is no great difference betwixt a Christian and a civil honest man. For the works of a Christian, in outward shew, are but base and simple. He doth his duty according to his vocation, he guideth his family, he tilleth the ground, he giveth counsel, he aideth and succoureth his neighbour. These works the carnal man doth not much esteem, but thinketh them to be common to all men, and such as the heathen may also do. For the world understandeth not the things which are of the Spirit of God, and therefore, it judgeth perversely of the works of the godly. But the monstrous superstition of the hypocrites and their will works, they have in great admiration. They count them holy works, and spare no charges in maintaining the same. Contrariwise, the works of the faithful, (which although in outward appearance they seem to be but vile and nothing worth, yet, are they good works indeed, and accepted of God, because, they are done in faith with a cheerful heart, and with obedience and thankfulness towards God,) these works, I say, they do not only, not acknowledge to be good works, but also they despise as most wicked and abominable. The world, therefore, believeth nothing less than that we have the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding, in the time of tribulation, or of the cross and of the confession of our faith, (which is the proper and principal work of those that believe) when we must either forsake wife, children, goods, and life, or else deny Christ, then it appeareth that we make confession of our faith, and that we confess Christ and his word by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We ought not, therefore, to doubt whether the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us or not, but to be assuredly persuaded that we "are the temple of the Holy Ghost,"

as Paul saith (1 Cor. iii. 16.) For if any man feel in himself a love towards the Word of God, and willingly heareth, writeth, and thinketh of Christ; let that man know, that this is not the work of man's will or reason, but the gift of the Holy Ghost; for it is impossible that these things should be done without the Holy Ghost. Contrariwise, where hatred and contempt of the Word is, there the devil the god of this world reigneth, "blinding men's hearts, and holding them captive that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine upon them," (1 Cor. iv. 4.) Which thing we see at this day in most part of the common people, which have no love to the Word, but contemn it as though it pertained nothing at all unto them. But whosoever do feel any love or desire to the Word, let them acknowledge with thankfulness, that this affection is poured into them by the Holy Ghost. For we bring not this affection and desire with us, neither can we be taught by any laws how we may obtain it, but this change is plainly and simply the work of the right hand of the Most High. Therefore, when we willingly and gladly hear the word preached concerning Christ the Son of God, who for us was made man and became subject to the law, to deliver us from the malediction of the law, hell, death, and damnation, then let us assure ourselves that God, by and with this preaching, sendeth the Holy Ghost into our hearts. Wherefore, it is very expedient for the godly to know that they have the Holy Ghost.

This I say to confute that pernicious doctrine of the Papists, which taught, that no man certainly knows, (although his life be never so upright and blameless,) whether he be in the favour of God or no. And this sentence commonly received, was a special principle and article of faith in the whole papacy; whereby, they utterly defaced the doctrine of faith, tormented men's consciences, banished Christ quite out of the church, darkened and denied all the benefits of the Holy Ghost, abolished the whole worship of God, and set up idolatry, contempt of God, and blasphemy against God, in men's hearts.

Augustine saith very well and godly, ‘every man seeth most certainly his own faith, if he have faith.’ This do they deny. God forbid (say they) that I should assure myself that I am under grace, that I am holy, and that I have the Holy Ghost; yea, although I live godly and do all good works. Ye which are young, and are not infected with this pernicious opinion, (whereupon the whole kingdom of the Pope is grounded,) take heed and fly from it as from a most horrible plague. We that are old men have been trained up in this error even from our youth, and have been so nursed therein, that it hath taken deep root in our hearts. Therefore, it is to us no less labour to unlearn and forget the same, than to learn and lay hold upon true faith. But we must be assured and out of doubt, that we are under grace, that we please God for Christ’s sake, and that we have the Holy Ghost. “For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.” (Rom. viii. 9.)

Wherefore, whether thou be a minister of God’s word, or a magistrate in the commonwealth, thou must assuredly think that thy office pleaseth God: but this thou canst never do, unless thou have the Holy Ghost. But thou wilt say, I doubt not but that my office pleaseth God, because it is God’s ordinance; but I doubt of mine own person, whether it please God or no. Here thou must resort to the Word of God; which teacheth and assureth us, that not only the office of the person, but also the person himself, pleaseth God. For the person is baptized, believeth in Christ, is purged in his blood from all his sins, and liveth in the communion and fellowship of his church. Moreover, he doth not only love the pure doctrine of the Word, but also, he is glad and greatly rejoiceth when he seeth it advanced, and the number of the faithful increased. Contrariwise, he detesteth the Pope and all his sectaries, with their wicked doctrine; according to that saying of the Psalm, “I hate them that imagine evil things, but thy law do I love,” (Psalm cxix. 113.)

We ought therefore to be surely persuaded, that not only our office, but our person, pleaseth God: yea

whatsoever it saith, doth, or thinketh particularly, the same pleaseth God: not for our own sake, but for Christ's sake, who was made under the law for us. Now we are sure that Christ pleaseth God, and that he is holy, &c. Forasmuch then as Christ pleaseth God, and we are in him, we also please God and are holy. And although sin do still remain in our flesh, and we also daily fall and offend, yet grace is more abundant and stronger than sin. The mercy and truth of God reigneth over us for ever. Wherefore, sin cannot terrify us and make us doubtful of the grace of God which is in us. For Christ, that most mighty giant, hath quite abolished the law, condemned sin, and vanquished death and all evils. So long as he is at the right hand of God making intercession for us, we cannot doubt of the grace and favour of God towards us.

Moreover, God hath also sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, as Paul here saith. But Christ is most certain in his Spirit that he pleaseth God, &c.; therefore, we also, having the same Spirit of Christ, must be assured that we are under grace for his sake, which is most assured. This I have said concerning the inward testimony, whereby a Christian man's heart ought to be fully persuaded, that he is under grace and hath the Holy Ghost. Now, the outward signs, (as before I have said,) are, gladly to hear of Christ, to preach and teach Christ, to render thanks unto him, to praise him, to confess him, yea, with the loss of goods and life; moreover, to do our duty according to our vocation, as we are able to do it [I say,] in faith, joy, &c., not to delight in or to thrust ourselves into another man's vocation, but to attend upon our own, to help our needy brother, to comfort the heavy hearted, &c. By these signs, as by certain effects and consequents, we are fully assured and confirmed, that we are in God's favour. The wicked also do imagine that they have the same signs, but they have nothing less. Hereby we may plainly perceive, that the Pope, with his doctrine, doth nothing else but trouble and torment men's consciences, and at length drive them into desperation. For he not

only teacheth, but he also commandeth men to doubt. Therefore, as the Psalm saith, "There is no truth or certainty in his mouth," (Psalm v. 9.) And, in another place, "Under his tongue is iniquity and mischief." (Psalm x. 7.)

Here we may see, what great infirmity is yet in the faith of the godly. For if we could be fully persuaded that we are under grace, that our sins are forgiven, that we have the Spirit of Christ, that we are the children of God; then, doubtless, we shall be thankful to God for this inestimable gift. But, because we feel contrary motions; that is to say, fear, doubtfulness, anguish, and heaviness of heart, and such like, therefore, we cannot assure ourselves hereof; yea, our conscience judgeth it a great presumption and pride to challenge this glory. Wherefore, if we well understand this thing rightly, and as we should do, we must put it in practice; for without experience and practice, it can never be learned.

Wherefore, let every man so practise with himself, that his conscience may be fully assured that he is under grace, and that his person and his works do please God. And if he feel in himself any wavering or doubting, let him exercise his faith and wrestle against this doubting, and let him labour to attain more strength and assurance of faith: so that he may be able to say, I know that I am accepted, and that I have the Holy Ghost; not for mine own worthiness, my work, my merit, but for Christ's sake; who, of his inestimable love towards us, made himself thrall and subject to the law, and took away the sins of the world; in him do I believe! If I be a sinner and err, he is righteous and cannot err. Moreover, I gladly hear, read, sing, and write of him: and I desire nothing more, than that his Gospel may be known to the whole world, and that many may be converted unto him.

These things do plainly witness, that the Holy Ghost is present with us, and in us. For such things are not wrought in the heart by man's strength, nor gotten by man's industry or travel, but are obtained by Christ

alone; who first maketh us righteous by the knowledge of himself in his holy gospel; and afterwards he createth a new heart in us, bringeth forth good motions, and giveth unto us that assurance, whereby we are persuaded that we please the Father for his sake. Also, he giveth us a true judgment; whereby, we prove and try those things which before we knew not, or else altogether despised. It behoveth us, therefore, to wrestle against this doubting, that we may daily overcome it more and more, and attain to a full persuasion and certainty of God's favour towards us; rooting out of our hearts this cursed opinion, that a man ought to doubt of the grace and favour of God: which hath infected the whole world.

VERSE 6.

Crying, Abba Father.

Paul might have said, "God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts," *calling*, Abba Father. He saith not so, but *crying*. "Abba Father:" that he might shew and set forth the temptation of a Christian which yet is but weak, and weakly believeth. In the eighth to the Romans he calleth this crying, "an unspeakable groaning." Likewise he saith, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities. For we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings," &c.

And this is a singular consolation, when he saith, "that the spirit of Christ is sent into our hearts, crying, Abba Father." And again, "that he helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with unspeakable groanings." He that could assuredly believe this, should never be overcome with any affliction, were it never so great. But there are many things that hinder this faith in us. First, our heart is born in sin. Moreover, this evil is naturally grafted in us, that we doubt of the good-will of God towards us, and cannot assure ourselves, that we please God, &c. Besides all this, the devil, our adversary, rangeth about with terrible roarings,

and saith, Thou art a sinner, therefore, God is angry with thee, and will destroy thee for ever. Against these horrible and intolerable roarings, we have nothing whereupon to hold and stay ourselves, but only the word which setteth Christ before us as a conqueror over sin, and death, and over all evils. But to cleave fast to the Word in this temptation and these terrors of conscience, herein standeth all the difficulty! For then Christ appeareth to no sense! We see him not: the heart feeleth not his presence or succour in temptation: but rather, it seemeth that he is angry with us, and forsakes us. Moreover, when a man is tempted and afflicted, he feeleth the fiery darts of the devil, the terrors of death, and the anger and judgment of God. All these things cry out horribly against us, so that we see nothing else but desperation and eternal death. But yet in the midst of these terrors of the law, thunderings of sin, assaults of death, and roarings of the devil, the Holy Ghost (saith Paul) crieth in our hearts "Abba Father!" And this crying surmounteth the horrible cries of the law, sin, death, and the devil, &c. It pierceth the clouds and the heavens, and ascendeth into the ears of God.

Paul signifieth, therefore, by these words, that there is yet infirmity in the godly; as he doth also in the sixth chapter to the Romans, when he saith, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." Forasmuch, therefore, as the sense and feeling of the contrary is strong in us; that is to say, for as much as we feel more the displeasure of God than his good-will and favour towards us; therefore, the Holy Ghost is sent into our hearts; which doth not only sigh and request for us, but mightily crieth, "Abba Father;" and prayeth for us, according to the will of God, with tears and unspeakable groanings. And how is this done? When we are in terrors and in the conflict of conscience, we take hold of Christ, and believe that he is our Saviour; but then do the law and sin terrify and torment us most of all. Moreover, the devil assaileth us with all his engines and fiery darts, and goeth about with all his power to take away Christ and all consolations from us. Here we feel our-

selves almost gone and at the point of desperation : for then, we are that “bruised reed” and “smoking flax” which **Isaiah** speaketh of, chap. xlii. 3. Notwithstanding, in the mean season, the Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings (Rom. viii. 28 ;) and certifieth our spirits, that we are the children of God. Thus is the mind raised up in terrors, it looketh unto his Saviour and high bishop, **Jesus Christ**, it overcometh the infirmity of the flesh, it conceiveth comfort again; and saith, “**Abba Father.**” This groaning which then we scantily feel, Paul calleth a “crying,” and “unspeakable groaning,” which filleth both heaven and earth. Moreover, he calleth it the crying and groaning of the “**Spirit;**” because the Holy Ghost stirreth up the same in our hearts, when we are weak and oppressed with temptation and terror.

Although then the law, sin, and the devil, cry out against us never so much with great and terrible roarings, which seem to fill heaven and earth, and far to exceed this groaning of our heart, yet can they not hurt us. For the more fiercely they assail us, and accuse and torment us with their cryings, so much the more do we groan, and, in groaning, lay hold upon **Christ**, call upon him with heart and mouth, cleave unto him, and believe that he was made under the law, that he might deliver us from the curse of the law and destroy both sin and death. And thus, when we have taken hold of **Christ** by faith, we cry, through him, “**Abba Father,**” (Gal. iv. 6.) And this our cry doth far surmount the roaring of the law, sin, the devil, &c.

But so far is it that we think this groaning which we make in these terrors and this our weakness to be a cry, that scarcely we perceive it to be a groaning. For our faith, which in temptation thus groaneth unto **Christ**, is very weak, if we consider our own sense and feeling; and therefore, we hear not this cry. We have but only the Word; which, when we apprehend in this conflict, we have a little breathing, and then we groan. Of this groaning some little feeling we have, but the cry we hear not. “But he (saith Paul) which searcheth the

hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the Spirit," &c. (Rom. viii. 27.) To this searcher of the hearts, this small and feeble groaning (as it seemeth unto us) is a loud and mighty cry, and an unspeakable groaning: in comparison whereof, the great and horrible roarings of the law, of sin, of death, of the devil, and of hell, are nothing, neither can they be once heard. Paul, therefore, not without cause, calleth this groaning of a godly afflicted heart, a cry, and a groaning of the spirit which cannot be expressed. For it filleth heaven; so that the angels think they hear nothing else but this cry.

But in us, there is a clean contrary feeling. For it seemeth unto us, that this our small groaning doth not so pierce the clouds, that there is nothing else heard in heaven of God or his angels. Nay, we think, and especially during the time of temptation, that the devil horribly roareth against us, that the heavens thunder and the earth trembleth, that all will fall upon us, that all creatures threaten our destruction, that hell is open and ready to swallow us up. This feeling is in our heart, and these horrible voices and this fearful show we hear and we see. And this it is that Paul saith, in 2 Cor. xii. that "the strength of Christ is made perfect through weakness." For then is Christ almighty indeed, then doth he truly reign and triumph in us, when we are so weak that we can scarcely groan. But Paul saith, that this groaning is, in the ears of God, a most mighty cry which filleth both heaven and earth!

Christ also, in the eighteenth of Luke, in the parable of the wicked judge, calleth this groaning of a faithful heart a cry; yea, and such a cry, as ceaseth not day and night to cry unto God; where he saith, "Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. Now shall not God avenge his elect which cry day and night unto him; yea, though he suffer long for them? Yea, I tell you he will avenge them quickly." We at this day, in so great persecution and contradiction of the Pope, of tyrants and sectaries which fight against us both on the right hand and on the left, can do nothing else but utter such groanings. And these were our guns and artillery, where-

with we have so many years scattered the counsels and enterprizes of our adversaries; whereby also, we have begun to overthrow the kingdom of antichrist. They also shall provoke Christ to hasten the day of his glorious coming, wherein he shall abolish all rule, authority, and power, and shall put all his enemies under his feet. So be it!

In the fourteenth of Exodus, the Lord speaketh unto Moses at the Red Sea, saying, "Why criest thou unto me?" Yet Moses cried not, but trembled and almost despaired, for he was in great trouble. It seemed that infidelity reigned in him, and not faith. For he saw the people of Israel so compassed and enclosed with the Egyptian host and with the sea, that there was no way whereby they might escape. Here Moses durst not once open his mouth. How then did he cry? We must not judge, therefore, according to the feeling of our own heart, but according to the Word of God; which teacheth us, that the Holy Ghost is given to those that are afflicted, terrified, and ready to despair, to raise them up and to comfort them; that they may not be overcome in their temptations and afflictions, but may overcome them; and yet, not without great terror and troubles.

The Papists dreamed, 'that holy men had the Holy Ghost in such sort, that they never had nor felt any temptation.' They spake of the Holy Ghost, only by speculation and naked knowledge. But Paul saith, that "the strength of Christ is made perfect through our weakness." Also, that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings." Therefore, we have then most need of the help and comfort of the Holy Ghost, yea, and then he is most ready to help us, when we are most weak and nearest to desperation. If any man suffer affliction with a constant and joyful heart, then hath the Holy Ghost done his office in him. And indeed, he exerciseth his work specially and properly in those which have suffered great terrors and afflictions, and have (as the Psalm saith,) "approached nigh to the gates of hell."

As I said of Moses, which saw present death in the waters and on every side whithersoever he turned his face. He was therefore in extreme anguish and desperation, and (no doubt) he felt in his heart a mighty cry of the devil against him; saying, all this people shall this day perish, for they can escape no way; and of this great calamity thou only shalt be found to be the author, because thou hast led them out of Egypt. Besides all this, the people cried out against him, saying, "Were there no graves in Egypt? Thou hast brought us out that we should die here in the wilderness. Had it not been better for us to have served the Egyptians, than here wretchedly to die in the wilderness?" (Exod. xiv. 11.) The Holy Ghost was not here in Moses by bare speculation and knowledge only, but truly and effectually, who made intercession for him with unspeakable groaning; so that he sighed unto the Lord and said, "O Lord, at thy commandment have I led forth this people, help us therefore." This groaning and sighing unto God, the scripture calleth, a "crying."

This matter I have the more largely prosecuted, that I might plainly shew what the office of the Holy Ghost is, and when he specially exerciseth the same. In temptation, therefore, we must put no wise judge thereof according to our own sense and feeling, or by the crying of the law, sin, the devil, &c. If we here follow our own sense, and believe those cryings; we shall think ourselves to be destitute of all help and succour of the Holy Ghost, and utterly cast away from the presence of God. Nay rather, let us remember what Paul saith, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities," &c.: also, it crieth, "Abba Father;" that is to say, it uttereth a certain feeble sighing and groaning of the heart (as it seemeth unto us) which, notwithstanding, before God, is a loud cry and an unspeakable groaning. Wherefore, in the midst of thy temptation and infirmity, cleave only unto Christ, and groan unto him; he giveth the Holy Ghost which crieth, "Abba Father." And this feeble groaning, is a mighty cry in the ears of God; and so filleth heaven and earth, that God heareth nothing

else ; and moreover, it stoppeth the cries of all other things whatsoever.

Thou must mark also, that Paul saith, that the Spirit maketh intercession for us in our temptation ; not with many words, or long prayer, but only with a groaning ; which, notwithstanding, cannot be expressed. And that he crieth, not aloud with tears, saying, “ Have mercy on me, O God,” &c. (Ps. li. 1,) but only uttereth a little sound, and a feeble groaning, as, “ Ah Father.” This is but a little word, and yet notwithstanding, it comprehendeth all things. The mouth speaketh not, but the affection of the heart speaketh after this manner. Although I be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from thy presence, yet am I thy child, and thou art my Father for Christ’s sake. I am beloved because of the Beloved. Wherefore, this little word “ Father” conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings ; which groanings cannot be uttered with any words or eloquence, for no tongue can express them.

I have used many words to declare that a Christian must assure himself that he is in the favour of God, and that he hath the crying of the Holy Ghost in his heart. This have I done, that we may learn to reject and utterly to abandon that devilish opinion of the whole kingdom of the Pope ; which taught, ‘ that a man ought to be uncertain, and to stand in doubt of the grace and favour of God towards him.’ If this opinion be received, then Christ profiteth nothing. For he that doubteth of God’s favour towards him, must needs doubt also of the promises of God ; and so, consequently, of the will of God, and of the benefits of Christ ; namely, that he was born, suffered, died, and rose again for us, &c. But there can be no greater blasphemy against God, than to deny his promises, to deny God himself, and to deny Christ, &c. Wherefore it was not only an extreme madness, but an horrible impiety, that the monks did so ear-

nestly entice the youth, both men and women, to their monasteries, and to their holy orders (as they called them,) as to a most certain state of salvation; and yet, when they had thus done, they bade them doubt of the grace and favour of God towards them.

Moreover, the Pope called all the world to the obedience of the church of Rome, as to an holy state in the which they might undoubtedly attain salvation; and yet, after he had brought them under the obedience of the laws, he commanded them to doubt of their salvation. So, the kingdom of antichrist braggeth and vaunteth at the first of the holiness of his orders, his rules, and his laws, and assuredly promiseth everlasting life to such as observe and keep them; but afterwards, when these miserable men have long afflicted their bodies with watching, fasting, and such like exercises, according to the traditions and ordinances of men, this is all that they gain thereby,—that they are uncertain whether this obedience please God or no! Thus, Satan most horribly dallied in the death and destruction of souls through the pope; and therefore is the papacy a slaughter-house of consciences, and the very kingdom of the devil!

Now to establish and confirm this pernicious and cursed error, they alleged the saying of Solomon. “The just and the wise men are in the hands of God; and yet no man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or hatred,” (Eccles. ix. 1.) Some understand this of that which is to come, and some again of that which is present, but neither of them understand Solomon, who, in that place, meaneth nothing less than that which they dream. Moreover, the whole scripture teacheth us, especially, and above all things, that we should not doubt, but assure ourselves, and undoubtedly believe, that God is merciful, loving, and patient; that he is neither a dissembler nor deceiver; but that he is faithful and true, and keepeth his promise, yea, and hath performed, in delivering his only begotten Son to death for our sins, “that every one that believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Here we cannot doubt

but that God is pleased with us, that he loveth us indeed, that the hatred and wrath of God is taken away, seeing he suffered his Son to die for us wretched sinners. Although this matter be set out and often repeated throughout the whole Gospel, yet it profiteth nothing at all. This one saying of Solomon perversely understood, did more prevail, (especially among the votaries and hypocrites of the straiter religion,) than all the promises and consolations of the whole scripture, yea, than Christ himself. They abused the scripture, therefore, to their own destruction, and were most justly punished for despising the scriptures and rejecting the Gospel.

It is expedient for us to know these things. First, because the Papists vaunt of their holiness as if they had never committed any evil: therefore, they must be convinced by their own abominations wherewith they have filled the whole world, as their own books do witness, whereof there is yet an infinite number. Secondly, that we may be fully certified that we have the pure doctrine of the Gospel; of which, certainly, the Pope cannot glory; in whose kingdom, though all things else were sound and uncorrupt, yet this monstrous doctrine of doubting God's grace and favour, passeth all other monsters. And although it be manifest that the enemies of Christ's Gospel teach uncertain things, because they command that men's consciences should remain in doubt, yet notwithstanding, they condemn and kill us as heretics, because we dissent from them and teach those things which are certain. And this they do with such devilish rage and cruelty, as if they were most assured of their doctrine.

Let us therefore give thanks unto God, that we are delivered from this monstrous doctrine of doubting, and can now assure ourselves, that the Holy Ghost crieth and bringeth forth in our hearts "unspeakable groanings." And this is our anchor-hold and our foundation. The Gospel commandeth us to behold, not our own good works, our own perfection, but God the Promiser, and Christ the Mediator. Contrariwise, the Pope commandeth us to look, not unto God the Promiser, nor

unto Christ our high Bishop, but unto our works and merits. Here, on the one side, doubting and desperation must needs follow ; but on the other side, assurance of God's favour and joy of the Spirit. For we cleave unto God who cannot lie. For he saith, behold I deliver my Son to death, that, through his blood, he may redeem thee from thy sins and from eternal death. In this case, I cannot doubt unless I utterly deny God. And this is the reason that our doctrine is most sure and certain, because it carrieth us out of ourselves ; that we should not lean to our own strength, our own conscience, our own feeling, our own person, and our own works, but to that which is without us ; that is to say, the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive us. This the Pope knoweth not, be he never so just and so wise, whether he be worthy of love or of hatred. But if he be just and wise, he knoweth assuredly that he is beloved of God ; or else, he is neither just nor wise.

Moreover, this sentence of Solomon speaketh nothing at all of the hatred or favour of God towards men, but it is a moral sentence reproving the ingratitude of men. For such is the perverseness and ingratitude of the world, that the better a man deserveth, the less thanks he shall have : and oftentimes, he that should be his most friend, shall be his most enemy : contrariwise, such as least deserve, shall be most esteemed. So David, a holy man and a good king, was cast out of the kingdom. The prophets, Christ, and his apostles, were slain. To conclude, the history of all nations witness, that many men well deserving of their country, were cast unto banishment by their own citizens, and there lived in great misery ; and some also shamefully perished in prison. Wherefore Solomon, in this place, speaketh, not of the conscience having to do with God, nor of the favour or judgment, the love or hatred of God, but of the judgments and affections of men among themselves. As though he would say, there are many just and wise men, by whom God worketh much good and giveth peace and quietness unto men : but so far off are they from acknowledging the same, that oftentimes they requite

them again most unkindly and uncourteously for their well doings and deservings. Therefore, although a man do all things well, and never so well, yet he knoweth not whether, by this his diligence and faithfulness, he deserves the hatred or favour of men.

So we, at this day, when we thought we should have found favour among our own countrymen, (for we preach unto them the Gospel of peace, life, and eternal salvation,) instead of favour, we have found bitter and cruel hatred. Indeed, at the first, many were greatly delighted with our doctrine, and received it gladly. We thought they would have been our friends and brethren, and that with one consent together with us they would have planted and preached this doctrine to others. But now we find, that they are false brethren and our deadly enemies, which sow and spread abroad false doctrine; and that which we teach well and godly, they wickedly pervert and overthrow, stirring up offences in the churches. Whosoever, therefore, doth his duty godly and faithfully, in what kind of life soever he be, and for his well-doing receiveth nothing again but the unkindness and hatred of men, let him not tease and torment himself therefore, but let him say with Christ, "They hated me without a cause." Again, "For that they should have loved me, they slandered me; but I did pray," (Ps. cxix. 3, 4.)

The Pope, therefore, with this devilish doctrine whereby he commanded men to doubt of the favour of God towards them, took away God and all his promises out of the church, buried all the benefits of Christ, and abolished the whole Gospel. These inconveniences do necessarily follow; for men do not lean to the promises of God, but to their own works and merits. Therefore, they cannot be assured of the good-will of God towards them, but must needs doubt thereof; and so, at length, despair. No man can understand what God's will is, and what pleaseth him, but in his good Word. This Word assureth us, that God hath cast away all the anger and displeasure which he had conceived against us, when he gave his only begotten Son for our sins, &c. Wherefore,

let us utterly abandon this devilish doubting wherewith the whole Papacy was poisoned, and let us be carefully assured that God is merciful unto us, that we please him, that he hath a care over us, and that we have the Holy Ghost which maketh intercession for us with such crying and groaning as cannot be expressed.

Now this is the true “crying” and “groaning” indeed, when a man in temptation calleth upon God, not as a tyrant, not as an angry judge, not as a tormentor, but as a “Father;” although this groaning be so soft and so secret, that it can scarcely be perceived. For in serious temptations and in the time of trial, where the conscience wrestleth with the judgment of God, it is wont to call God not a “Father,” but an unjust, an angry, a cruel tyrant and judge. And this crying which Satan stirreth up in the heart, far surpasseth the cry of the Spirit, and is strongly felt. For then it seemeth, that God hath forsaken us and will throw us down into hell. So the faithful complain oftentimes in the Psalms, “I am cast down from the presence of God,” (Ps. xxxi. 22.) Also, “I am become as a broken vessel,” &c. This is not the groaning that crieth “Abba Father,” but the roaring of God’s wrath, which crieth strongly, O cruel judge, O cruel tormentor, &c. Here is now the time that thou turn away thine eyes from the law, from works, and from the sense and feeling of thy conscience, and lay hold by faith of the promise; that is to say, of the Word of grace and life, which raiseth up the conscience again; so that now, it beginneth to groan and say, Although the law accuse me, sin and death terrify me never so much, yet, O my God, thou promisest grace, righteousness, and everlasting life, through Jesus Christ. And so, the promise bringeth a sighing and a groaning which crieth, “Abba Father.”

VER. 7.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.

This is the shutting up and the conclusion of that which he said before. As if he should say, this being

true, that we have received the Spirit by the Gospel, whereby we cry, "Abba Father;" then is this decree pronounced in heaven,—that there is no bondage any more, but more liberty and adoption. And who bringeth this liberty? Verily this groaning. By what means? The Father offereth unto me, by his promise, his grace, and his fatherly favour. This remaineth then—that I should receive this grace. And this is done, when I again with this groaning do cry, and with a childly heart do assent unto this name of "Father." Here then the Father and the son meet, and the marriage is made up without all pomp and solemnity; that is to say, nothing at all cometh between; no law nor work is here required. For what should a man do in these terrors and horrible darkness of temptations? Here is nothing else but the Father promising and calling me son by Christ, who was made under the law, &c. and I receiving and answering by this groaning, saying "Father." Here then is no exacting; nothing is required, but only that childly groaning that apprehendeth a sure hope and trust in tribulation, and saith, thou promisest and callest me thy child for Christ's sake, and I again receive thy promise and call thee "Father." This is indeed to be made children simply and without any works. But these things, without experience and practice, cannot be understood.

Paul, in this place, taketh the word "servant" otherwise than he did before in the third chapter; where he saith, "There is neither bond nor free," &c. Here, he calleth him a "servant" of the law, which is subject to the law; as he did a little before, "We were in bondage under the rudiments of the world." Wherefore, to be a servant, according to Paul in this place, is to be guilty and captive under the law, under the wrath of God and death; to behold God, not as a merciful Father, but as a tormentor, an enemy, and a tyrant. This is indeed to be kept in bondage and Babylonical captivity, and to be cruelly tormented therein. For the law delivereth not from sin and death, but revealeth and increaseth sin and engendereth wrath. This bondage (saith Paul, Rom.

iii. 20, Rom. iv. 15,) continueth no longer, it oppresseth us and maketh us heavy no more, &c. &c. Paul saith, "Thou shalt be no more a servant." But the sentence is more general if we say, There shall be no bondage in Christ any more, but more freedom and adoption. For when faith cometh, that bondage ceaseth; as he said before in the third chapter.

Now if we, by the Spirit of Christ crying in our heart "Abba Father," be no more servants, but children; then it followeth, that we are not only delivered from the Pope and all the abominations of men's traditions, but also from all the jurisdiction and power of the law of God. Wherefore, we ought in no wise to suffer the law to reign in our consciences, and much less the Pope with his vain threatenings and terrors. Indeed, he roareth mightily as a lion, (Apoc. x.) and threateneth to all those that obey not his laws, the wrath and indignation of Almighty God, and of his blessed apostles, &c. But here, Paul armeth and comforteth us against these roarings; when he saith, "Thou art no more a servant, but a son." Take hold of this consolation by faith, and say, O law, thy tyranny can have no place in the throne where Christ my Lord sitteth; there, I cannot hear thee, (much less do I hear thee, O Antichrist,) for I am free and a son; who must not be subject to any bondage or servile law. Let not Moses, therefore, with his laws (much less the Pope) ascend up into the bride-chamber there to lie; that is to say, to reign in the conscience; which Christ hath delivered from the law, to the end that it should not be subject to any bondage. Let the servants abide with the ass in the valley; let none but Isaac ascend up into the mountain with his father Abraham, (Gen. xii. 5.) That is, let the law have dominion over the body and over the old man; let *him* be under the law and suffer the burden to be laid upon him; let him suffer himself to be exercised and vexed with the law: let the law limit and prescribe him what he ought to do, what he ought to suffer, and how he ought to live and govern himself among men. But let it not defile the bed in which Christ should rest and sleep alone; that is to

say, let it not trouble the conscience. For she alone ought to live with Christ her spouse in the kingdom of liberty and adoption.

If then (saith he) by the Spirit of Christ ye cry "Abba Father," then are ye indeed no longer servants, but free men and sons. Therefore, ye are without the law, without sin, without death; that is to say, ye are saved; and ye are now quite delivered from all evils. Wherefore, the adoption bringeth with it the eternal kingdom and all the heavenly inheritance. Now, how inestimable the glory of this gift is, man's heart is not able to conceive, and much less to utter. In the meantime, we see this but darkly, and as it were, afar off; we have this little groaning and feeble faith, which only resteth upon the hearing and the sound of the voice of Christ in giving the promise. Therefore we must not measure this thing by reason, or by our own feeling, but by the promise of God. Now, because he is infinite, therefore, his promise is also infinite, although it seem to be never so much enclosed in these narrow straits; (these anguishes I mean.) Wherefore, there is nothing that can now accuse, terrify, or bind the conscience any more. For there is no more servitude, but adoption; which not only bringeth us unto liberty from the law, sin, and death; but also, the inheritance of everlasting life!

INTERNAL WARFARE OF THE CHILD OF GOD.

GALATIANS V. 17.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

When Paul saith that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," he admonisheth us that we must feel the concupiscence of the flesh; that is to say, not only carnal lust, but also pride, wrath, heaviness, impatience, incredulity, and such like. Notwithstanding, he would have us so to feel them, that we consent not unto them nor accomplish them; that is, that we neither think, speak, nor do those things which

the flesh provoketh us unto. As, if it move us to anger, yet we should be angry in such wise as we are taught in the fourth Psalm, that we sin not. As if Paul would thus say, I know that the flesh will provoke you unto wrath, envy, doubting, incredulity, and such like; but resist it by the Spirit, that ye sin not. But if ye forsake the guiding of the Spirit and follow the flesh, ye shall fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and ye shall die; as Paul saith in the eighth to the Romans. So, this saying of the apostle is to be understood, not of fleshly lusts only, but of the whole kingdom of sin.

VERSE 17.

And these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These two captains or leaders, saith he, the flesh and the Spirit, are one against another in your body, so that ye cannot do what ye would. And this place witnesseth plainly, that Paul writeth these things to the faithful; that is, to the church believing in Christ, baptized, justified, renewed, and having full forgiveness of sins. Yet notwithstanding, he saith she hath flesh rebelling against the Spirit. After the same manner he speaketh of himself in the seventh to the Romans, "I, (saith he) am carnal and sold under sin." And again, "I see another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading me captive under the law of sin which is in my members." Also, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" &c.

Here not only the schoolmen, but also some of the old fathers are much troubled, seeking how they may excuse Paul. For it seemeth unto them absurd and unseemly, to say, that the elect vessel of Christ should have sin. But we credit Paul's own words, wherein he plainly confesseth, that he is sold under sin, that he is led captive of sin, that he hath a law in his members rebelling against him, and that in his flesh he serveth the law of sin. Here again they answer, that the apostle speaketh in the person of the wicked. But the wicked do not

complain of the rebellion of their flesh, of any battle or conflict, or of the captivity and bondage of sin; for sin mightily reigneth in them. This is therefore the very complaint of Paul, and of all the faithful. Wherefore they have done very wickedly, which have excused Paul and all the faithful to have no sin. For by this persuasion, (which proceedeth of ignorance of the doctrine of faith,) they have robbed the church of a singular consolation, they have abolished the forgiveness of sins, and made Christ of none effect.

Wherefore, when Paul saith, "I see another law in my members," &c. he denieth not that he hath flesh and the vices of flesh in him. It is likely, therefore, that he felt sometimes the motions of carnal lust. But yet, no doubt, these motions were well suppressed in him by the great and grievous afflictions and temptations both of mind and body wherewith he was in a manner continually exercised and vexed, as his epistles do declare; or, if he at any time be merry and strong, and felt the lust of the flesh, wrath, impatience, and such like, yet, he resisted them by the Spirit, and suffered not these motions to bear rule in him. Therefore, let us in no wise suffer such comfortable places, (whereby Paul describeth the battle of the flesh against the Spirit in his own body,) to be corrupted with such foolish glosses. The schoolmen, the monks, and such other, never felt any spiritual temptations; and therefore, they fought only for the repressing and overcoming of fleshly lust and lechery; and being proud of that victory which they never yet obtained, they thought themselves far better and more holy than married men. I will not say, that under this holy pretence they nourished and maintained all kinds of horrible sins, dissension, pride, hatred, disdain, and despising of their neighbours, trust in their own righteousness, presumption, contempt of all godliness and of the word of God, infidelity, blasphemy, and such like. Against these sins they never fought: nay rather, they took them to be no sins at all: they put righteousness in the keeping of their foolish and wicked vows, and

unrighteousness in the neglecting and contemning of the same.

But this must be our ground and anchor-hold,—that Christ is our only and perfect righteousness. If we have nothing whereunto we may trust, yet these three things, as Paul saith, faith, hope, and love, do remain. Therefore, we must always believe and always hope; we must always take hold of Christ as the head and foundation of our righteousness.—“He that believeth in him shall not be ashamed,” (Rom. ix. 33.) Moreover, we must labour to be outwardly righteous also: that is to say, not to consent to the flesh, which always enticeth us to some evil, but to resist it by the Spirit. We must not be overcome with impatience for the unthankfulness and contempt of the people which abuseth the Christian liberty; but, through the Spirit, we must overcome this and all other temptations. Look then, how much we strive against the flesh by the Spirit, so much are we outwardly righteous. Albeit this righteousness doth not commend us before God.

Let no man therefore despair, if he feel the flesh oftentimes to stir up new battle against the Spirit; or if he cannot by-and-by subdue the flesh, and make it obedient unto the Spirit. I also do wish myself to have a more valiant and constant heart, which might be able not only boldly to condemn the threatenings of tyrants, the heresies, offences, and tumults which Satan and his soldiers, the enemies of the Gospel, stir up; but also, might by-and-by shake off the vexations and anguish of spirit; and briefly, might not fear the sharpness of death, but receive and embrace it as a most friendly guest. But “I find another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind,” &c. Some other do wrestle with inferior temptations, as poverty, reproach, impatience, and such like.

Let no man marvel, therefore, or be dismayed, when he feeleth in his body this battle of the flesh against the Spirit; but let him pluck up his heart and comfort himself with these words of Paul, “the flesh lusteth against

the spirit." Also "these are contrary one to another, so that ye cannot do those things that ye would." For by these sentences, he comforteth them that be tempted. As if he should say, it is impossible for you to follow the guidings of the Spirit in all things, without any feeling or hinderance of the flesh; nay the flesh will resist, and so resist and hinder you, that ye cannot do those things that ye gladly would. Here it shall be enough, if ye resist the flesh and fulfil not the lust thereof; that is to say, if ye follow the spirit and not the flesh; which easily is overthrown by impatency, coveteth to revenge, biteth, grudgeth, hateth God, is angry with him, despaireth, &c. Therefore, when a man feeleth this battle of the flesh, let him not be discouraged therewith; but let him resist in spirit, and say, I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me; for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwelleth so long as it liveth; but I will obey the spirit and not the flesh; that is, I will, by faith and hope, lay hold upon Christ; and, by his Word, I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

It is very profitable for the godly to know this, and to bear it well in mind, for it wonderfully comforteth them when they are tempted. When I was a monk, I thought by-and-by that I was utterly cast away if at any time I felt the lust of the flesh; that is to say, if I felt any evil motion of fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy against any brother. I essayed many ways to quiet my conscience; but it would not be, for the concupiscence and lust of my flesh did always return; so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts:—This or that sin thou hast committed; thou art infected with envy, with impatency, and such other sins; therefore, thou art entered into this holy order in vain, and all thy good works are unprofitable. If then I had rightly understood these sentences of Paul, "The flesh lusteth contrary to the spirit, and the spirit contrary to the flesh, and these two are one against another, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would do," I should not have so miserably tormented myself; but should have

thought and said to myself, as now commonly I do, Martin, thou shalt not utterly be without sin, for thou hast flesh; thou shalt therefore feel the battle thereof according to that saying of Paul, "The flesh resisteth the spirit." Despair not, therefore, but resist it strongly, and fulfil not the lusts thereof. Thus doing thou art not under the law.

I remember that Staupitius was wont to say, 'I have vowed unto God above a thousand times that I would become a better man; but I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow; for I have now learned by experience, that I am not able to perform it. Unless therefore God be favourable and merciful unto me for Christ's sake, and grant unto me a blessed and a happy hour when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able with all my vows and all my good deeds to stand before him.' This was not only a true, but also a godly and a holy desperation; and this must they all confess, both with mouth and heart, which will be saved. For the godly trust not to their own righteousness, but say with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall none that liveth be justified," (Ps. cxliii. 2.) Again, "If thou, O Lord, shouldst straitly mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Ps. xxx. 3.) They look unto Christ their reconciler, who gave his life for their sins. Moreover, they know, that the remnant of sin which is in their flesh, is not laid to their charge, but freely pardoned. Notwithstanding, in the meanwhile, they fight in spirit against the flesh, lest they should fulfil the lusts thereof. And although they feel the flesh to rage and rebel against the spirit, and themselves also do sometimes fall into sin through infirmity, yet are they not discouraged, nor think therefore that their state and kind of life, and the works which are done according to their calling, displease God, but they raise up themselves by faith.

The faithful, therefore, receive great consolation by this doctrine of Paul, in that they know themselves to have part of the flesh and part of the spirit; but yet so,

notwithstanding, that the spirit ruleth and the flesh is subdued and kept under awe, that righteousness reigneth and sin serveth. He that knoweth not this doctrine, and thinketh that the faithful ought to be without all fault, and yet seeth the contrary in himself, must needs at the length be swallowed up by the spirit of heaviness, and fall into desperation. But whoso knoweth this doctrine well, and useth it rightly, to him the things that are evil turn unto good. (Rom. viii. 28.) For when the flesh provoketh him to sin by occasion thereof, he is stirred up and forced to seek forgiveness of sins by Christ, and to embrace the righteousness of faith, which else, he would not so greatly esteem, nor seek for the same with so great desire. Therefore, it profiteth us very much, to feel sometimes the wickedness of our nature and corruption of our flesh, that yet, by this means, we may be waked and stirred up to faith, and to call upon Christ. And by this occasion, a Christian becometh a mighty workman, and a wonderful creator: which, of heaviness can make joy, of terror comfort, of sin righteousness, and of death life; when he by this means, repressing and bridling the flesh, maketh it subject to the spirit.

Wherefore, let not them which feel the lust of the flesh, despair of their salvation. Let them feel it and all the force thereof, so that they consent not to it. Let the passions of lust, wrath, and other such vices, shake them, so that they do not overthrow them. Let sin assail them, so that they do not accomplish it. Yea, the more godly a man is, the more doth he feel that battle. And hereof come these lamentable complaints of the faithful in the Psalms, and in the holy scripture. Of this battle, the hermits, the monks, the schoolmen, and all that seek righteousness and salvation by works, know nothing at all.

But here may some man say, that it is a dangerous matter to teach that a man is not condemned, if, by-and-by he overcome not the motions and passions of the flesh which he feeleth. For when this doctrine is taught amongst the common people, it maketh them careless, negligent, and slothful. This is it which I said a little before, that if we teach faith, then carnal men neglect and

reject works. If works be required, then is faith and consolation of conscience lost. Here no man can be compelled, neither can there be any certain rule prescribed. But let every man diligently try himself to what passion of the flesh he is most subject; and when he findeth that, let him not be careless nor flatter himself, but let him watch and wrestle in spirit against it; that, if he cannot altogether bridle it, yet at the least he do not fulfil the lusts thereof.

This battle of the flesh all the children of God have had, and felt. And the same do we also feel and prove. He that searcheth his own conscience, if he be not an hypocrite, shall well perceive that to be true in himself which Paul here saith; that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." All the faithful, therefore, do feel and confess, that their flesh resisteth against the spirit, and that these two are so contrary the one to the other in themselves, that do what they can, they are not able to perform that which they would do. Therefore, the flesh hindereth us that we cannot keep the commandments of God; that we cannot love our neighbours as ourselves; much less can we love God with all our hearts. Therefore, it is impossible for us to become righteous by the works of the law. Indeed, there is a good will in us, and so must there be, (for it is the spirit itself which resisteth the flesh,) which would gladly do good, fulfil the law, love God and his neighbour, and such like; but the flesh obeyeth not this good-will, but resisteth it; and yet, God imputeth not unto us this sin, for he is merciful to those that believe, for Christ's sake.

But it followeth not, therefore, that thou shouldst make a light matter of sin because God doth not impute it. True it is that he doth not impute it. But to whom, and for what cause? To such as repent and lay hold by faith upon Christ the mercy-seat, for whose sake, as all their sins are forgiven them, even so the remnants of sin which are in them be not imputed unto them! They make not their sin less than it is, but amplify it, and set it out as it is indeed. For they know, that it cannot be put away by satisfac-

tions, works, or righteousness, but only by the death of Christ. And yet, notwithstanding, the greatness and enormity of their sin, doth not cause them to despair; but they assure themselves, that the same shall not be imputed unto them, or laid unto their charge.

This I say, lest any man should think, that after faith is received, there is little account to be made of sin. Sin is truly sin, whether a man commit it before he hath received the knowledge of sin, or after. And God always hateth sin; yea all sin is damnable, as touching the fact itself. But in that it is not damnable to him that believeth, it cometh of Christ, who, by his death, hath taken away sin. But to him that believeth not in Christ, not only all his sins are damnable, but even his good works also are sin; according to that saying, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," (Rom. xiv. 23.) Therefore, the error of the schoolmen is most pernicious, which do distinguish sins according to the fact, and not according to the person. He that believeth, hath as great sin as the unbeliever. But to him that believeth, it is forgiven and not imputed; to the unbeliever, it is not pardoned but imputed. To the believer, it is venial; to the unbeliever, it is mortal and damnable. Not for any difference of sins, or because the sin of the believer is less, and the sin of the unbeliever greater, but for the difference of the persons. For the faithful assureth himself by faith, that his sins are forgiven him, forasmuch as Christ hath given himself for it. Therefore, although he have sin in him, and daily sinneth, yet, he continueth godly. But contrariwise, the unbeliever continueth wicked. And this is the true wisdom and consolation of the godly:—that, although they have and commit sins, yet, they know, that for Christ's sake, they are not imputed unto them.

This I say for the comfort of the godly. For they only have and feel, indeed, that they have and do commit sins; that is to say, they feel that they do not love God so fervently as they should do, that they do not believe him so heartily as they would, but rather, they oftentimes doubt whether God have a care of them or

no ; they are impatient, and are angry with God in adversity. Hereof, as I have said, proceed the sorrowful complaints of the faithful in the scriptures, and especially in the Psalms. And Paul himself complaineth, that he is "sold under sin," (Rom. vii. 14.) And here he saith, that "the flesh resisteth and rebelleth against the spirit." But because they mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit, (as he saith in another place, and also in the end of this chapter,) "They crucify the flesh with the desires and lusts thereof," (Gal. v. 24); therefore, these sins do not hurt them nor condemn them. But if they obey the flesh in fulfilling the lust thereof, then do they lose faith and the Holy Ghost. And if they do not abhor their sin, and return unto Christ, (who hath given power to his church to receive and raise up those that be fallen so that they may recover faith and the Holy Ghost,) they die in their sins. Wherefore, we speak not of them which dream that they have faith, and yet continue still in their sins. These men, have their judgment already: "They that live after the flesh shall die." Also, "The works of the flesh are manifest; which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, debate, emulations, wrath, contentions, seditions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, gluttony, and such like: whereof I tell you before, as also I have told you, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Hereby we may see who be very saints indeed. They be not stocks and stones, (as the monks and schoolmen dream,) so that they are never moved with any thing, never feel any lust or desires of the flesh; but, as Paul saith, "their flesh lusteth against the spirit;" and therefore, they have sin, and both can and do sin. And the thirty-second Psalm witnesseth, that the faithful do confess their unrighteousness, and pray that the wickedness of their sin may be forgiven; where it saith, "I will confess against myself my wickedness unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the punishment of my sin. Therefore, shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto thee," &c. Moreover, the whole church, which indeed is holy,

prayeth that her sins may be forgiven her; and it believeth the forgiveness of sins. And in the 143d Psalm, David prayeth, "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall none that liveth be justified." And in Psalm cxxx. "If thou, O Lord, shouldest straitly mark iniquities, Lord; who shall stand in thy presence? But with thee is mercy," &c. Thus do the chiefest saints and children of God speak and pray; as David, Paul, &c. All the faithful, therefore, do speak and pray the same thing, and with the same spirit. The Popish sophisters read not the scriptures; or, if they read them, they have a veil before their eyes; and therefore, as they cannot judge rightly of any, so they cannot judge rightly either of sin or of holiness.

VERSE 18.

If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Paul cannot forget the doctrine of faith, but still repeateth it, and beateth it into their heads, yea, even when he treateth of good works. Here some man may object, how can it be that we should not be under the law? And yet thou, notwithstanding, O Paul, teachest us that we have flesh which lusteth against the spirit, and fighteth against us, tormenteth us, and bringeth us into bondage. And indeed we feel sin, and cannot be delivered from the feeling thereof, though we should never so fain. And what is this else but to be under the law? But he saith let this nothing trouble you, only do your endeavour that ye may be led by the Spirit; that is to say, shew yourselves willing to follow and obey that will which resisteth the flesh, and doth not accomplish the lusts thereof, (for this is to be led and to be drawn by the Spirit,) then are ye not under the law. So Paul speaketh of himself (Rom. vii.) "In my mind I serve the law of God;" that is to say, in spirit I am not subject to any sin, but yet in my flesh I serve the law of sin. The faithful then are not under the law; that is to say, in spirit, for the law cannot accuse them, nor

pronounce sentence of death against them, although they feel sin and confess themselves to be sinners, for the power and strength of the law is taken from it by Christ, "Who was made under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law," (Gal. iv. 4.) Therefore the law cannot accuse that for sin in the faithful, which is sin indeed, and committed against the law.

So great then is the power and dominion of the Spirit, that the law cannot accuse the godly; though they commit that which is sin indeed. For Christ is our righteousness, whom we apprehend by faith; he is without all sin, and therefore the law cannot accuse him. As long as we cleave fast unto him, we are led by the Spirit, and are free from the law. And so, the apostle even when he teacheth good works, forgetteth not his doctrine concerning justification; but always sheweth that it is impossible for us to be justified by works. For the remnants of sin, cleave fast in our flesh; and therefore, so long as our flesh liveth, it ceaseth not to lust contrary to the spirit. Notwithstanding, there cometh no danger unto us thereby, because we are free from the law, so that we walk in the Spirit.

And with these words, "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" thou mayest greatly comfort thyself and others that are grievously tempted. For it oftentimes cometh to pass, that a man is so vehemently assailed with wrath, hatred, impatiency, carnal desire, terror, and anguish of spirit, or some other lust of the flesh, that he cannot shake them off, though he would never so fain. What should he do in this case? Should he despair? No, God forbid: but let him say thus with himself, My flesh fighteth and rageth against the spirit. Let it rage as long as it listeth, only see thou that in any case thou consent not to it, to fulfil the lusts thereof, but walk wisely and follow the leadings of the Spirit. In so doing thou art free from the law. It accuseth and terrifieth thee I grant, but altogether in vain. In this conflict therefore of the flesh against the spirit, there is nothing better than to have the word of God before thine eyes, and therein to seek the comfort of the Spirit!

And let not him that suffereth this temptation, be dismayed, in that the devil can so aggravate sin, that during the conflict, he thinketh himself to be utterly overthrown, feeling nothing else but the wrath of God and desperation. Here in anywise let him not follow his own feeling and the judgment of reason, but let him take sure hold of this saying of Paul, "if ye be led by the Spirit," that is to wit, if ye raise up and comfort yourselves through faith in Christ ye are not under the law. So shall he have a strong buckler wherewith he may beat back all the fiery darts which the wicked fiend assaileth him withal. How much soever then the flesh doth boil and rage, yet cannot her motions and rages hurt and condemn him, forasmuch as he, following the guiding of the Spirit, doth not consent unto the flesh, nor fulfil the lusts thereof. Therefore when the motions of the flesh do rage, the only remedy is to take to us the sword of the Spirit, that is to say, the word of salvation (which is, that God would not the death of a sinner, but that he convert and live) and to fight against them; which if we do, let us not doubt but we shall obtain the victory, although so long as the battle endureth we feel the plain contrary. But set the word out of sight, and there is no counsel nor help remaining. Of this that I say, I myself have good experience. I have suffered many great passions, and the same also very vehement and great. But so soon as I have laid hold of any place of scripture, and stayed myself upon it, as upon my chief anchor-hold, straightways my temptations did vanish away, which without the word it had been impossible for me to endure any little space, and much less to evercome them.

The sum or effect therefore, of all that which Paul hath taught in this disputation or discourse concerning the conflict or battle between the flesh and the spirit, is this; that the saints and the elect of God cannot perform that which the Spirit desireth. For the spirit would gladly be altogether pure, but the flesh being joined unto the spirit will not suffer that. Notwithstanding they be saved by the remission of sins which is

in Christ Jesus. Moreover, because they walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, they be not under the law; that is to say, the law cannot accuse or terrify them, yea though it go about never so much so to do, yet shall it never be able to drive them to desperation.

VERSE 19.

Moreover, the works of the flesh be manifest, which are, &c.

This place is not unlike to this sentence of Christ, "by their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of brambles? So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit," &c. (Matt. vii. 16.) Paul teacheth the very same thing which Christ taught; that is to say, that works and fruits do sufficiently testify, whether the trees be good or evil, whether men follow the guiding of the flesh, or of the Spirit. As if he should say, lest some of you might say for himself, that he understandeth me not, now when I treat of the battle between the flesh and the spirit, I will set before your eyes first the works of the flesh, whereof many are known even to the ungodly; and then also the works of the Spirit.

And this doth Paul, because there were many hypocrites amongst the Galatians, (as there are also at this day among us,) which outwardly pretended to be godly men, and boasted much of the Spirit, and as touching the words, they understood the true doctrine of the Gospel; but they walked not according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh, and performed the works thereof. Whereby Paul manifestly convinceth them to be no such holy men indeed, as they boasted themselves to be. And lest they should despise this his admonition, he pronounceth against them this dreadful sentence, that they should not be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, to the end that, being thus admonished, they might amend. Every age, even in the faithful, hath his peculiar temptations; as fleshly lusts assail a man most of all in his youth; in his middle age ambition, and vain-glory;

and in his old age covetousness. There was never yet any of the faithful, whom the flesh hath not often in his lifetime provoked to impatency, anger, vain-glory, &c. Paul, therefore, speaking here of the faithful, saith, that the flesh lusteth in them against the spirit, &c. : therefore, they shall never be without the desires and battles of the flesh, notwithstanding they do not hurt them. But of this matter we must thus judge, that it is one thing to be provoked of the flesh, and yet not willingly to yield to the lusts and desires thereof, but to walk after the leading of the Spirit, and to resist the flesh ; and another thing to assent unto the flesh, and without all fear or remorse to perform and fulfil the works thereof, and to continue therein, and yet notwithstanding to counterfeit holiness, and to brag of the Spirit. The first he comforteth, when he saith that they be led by the Spirit, and be not under the law. The other he threateneth with everlasting destruction.

Notwithstanding, it sometimes happeneth, that the saints do sometimes fall, and perform the lusts of the flesh, as David fell horribly into adultery. Also he was the cause of the slaughter of many men when he caused Urias to be slain in the forefront of the battle, and thereby also he gave occasion to the enemies to glory and triumph over the people of God, to worship their idols, and to blaspheme the God of Israel. Peter also fell most grievously and horribly when he denied Christ. But although these sins were great and heinous, yet were they not committed upon any contempt of God, or of a wilful and obstinate mind ; but through infirmity and weakness. Again, when they were admonished, they did not obstinately continue in their sins, but repented. Such he willeth afterwards, in the sixth chapter, to be received, instructed, and restored, saying, “ If a man be fallen by occasion, into any sin, ye which are spiritual restore such a one with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” To those therefore which sin, and fall through infirmity, pardon is not denied, so that they rise again and continue not in their sin, for of all things continuance in sin is the

worst. But if they repent not, but still obstinately continue in their wickedness, and perform the desires of the flesh, it is a certain token that there is deceit in their spirit.

No man, therefore, shall be without lusts and desires so long as he liveth in the flesh, and therefore no man shall be free from temptations. Notwithstanding some are tempted one way and some another, according to the difference of persons. One man is assailed with more vehement and grievous motions, as with bitterness and anguish of spirit, blasphemy, distrust, and desperation; another with more gross temptations, as with fleshly lusts, wrath, envy, covetousness, and such like. But in this case, Paul requireth that we walk in the Spirit, and resist the flesh. But whoso obeyeth the flesh, and continueth without the fear of God or remorse of conscience in accomplishing the lusts and desires thereof, let him know, that he pertaineth not unto Christ; and although he brag of the name of a Christian never so much, yet doth he but deceive himself. For they which are of Christ do crucify their flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.

WHO BE RIGHTLY CALLED SAINTS, AND BE SO
INDEED.

This place, (as I have also forewarned you by the way,) containeth in it a singular consolation; for it teacheth us, that the saints and most holy men in the world, live not without concupiscence and temptations of the flesh, nor yet without sins. It warneth us therefore to take heed, that we do not as some did of whom God writeth, which laboured to attain to such perfection, that they might be without all feeling of temptations or sins: that is to say very stocks or stones.

The like imagination the monks and schoolmen had of their saints, as though they had been very senseless blocks, and without all affections. The Virgin Mary felt great grief and sorrow of spirit when she missed her Son, (Luke ii.) David in the Psalms complaineth that he is almost swallowed up with the excessive sorrow for the

greatness of his temptations and sins. Paul also **complaineth** that he hath "battles without and terrors **within**," (2 Cor. vii. 5.); and that, "in his flesh he **serveth** the law of sin." He saith that he is careful for **all** the churches, (2 Cor. ix. 28,) and that God shewed **great** mercy towards him in that he delivered Epaphroditus being at the point of death to life again, lest he **should** have had sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, the **saints** of the Papists are like to the stoics, who imagined **such** wise men as in the world were "never yet to be **found**." And by this foolish and devilish persuasion, **which** proceeded from the ignorance of this doctrine of **Paul**, the schoolmen brought both themselves and others **without number** into horrible desperation.

When I was a monk, I did oftentimes most heartily **wish** that I might once be so happy as to see the **conversation** and life of some saint or holy man. But in the **meantime**, I imagined such a saint as lived in the wilderness, abstaining from meat and drink, and living **only** with roots of herbs and cold water: and this opinion of those monstrous saints I had learned, not only out of the books of the sophisters and schoolmen, but also out of the books of the fathers. For thus writeth Hierome in a certain place, 'As touching meats and drinks I say nothing: forasmuch as it is excess, that even such as are weak and feeble should use cold water, or eat any sodden thing,' &c. But now in the light of the Gospel, we plainly see who they are whom Christ and his apostles call saints,—not they which live a sole and a single life, or straitly observe days, meats, apparel, and such other things, or in outward appearance do other great and monstrous works, (as we read of many in the lives of the fathers;) but they which, being called by the sound of the Gospel, and baptized, do believe that they be justified and cleansed by the death of Christ. So Paul everywhere writing to the Christians calleth them holy, and the children and heirs of God, &c. Whosoever then do believe in Christ, whether they be men or women, bond or free, are all saints; not by their own works, but by the works of God which they receive by

faith, as his Word, his sacraments, the passion of Christ, his death, resurrection, victory, and the sending of the Holy Ghost. To conclude, they are saints through such a holiness as they freely receive, not through such a holiness as they themselves have gotten by their own industry, good works, and merits.

So the ministers of the Word, the magistrates of common-weals, parents, children, masters, servants, &c. are true saints; if, first, and before all things, they assure themselves that Christ is their "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" secondly, if every one would do his duty in his vocation according to the rule of God's Word, and obey not the flesh, but repress the lust and desire thereof by the Spirit. Now, whereas all be not of like strength to resist temptation, but many infirmities and offences are seen in the most part of men, this nothing hindereth their holiness, so that their sins proceed not of an obstinate wilfulness, but only of frailty and infirmity. For, (as I have said before,) the godly do feel the desires and lusts of the flesh, but they resist them to the end that they accomplish them not. Also, if they at any time unadvisedly fall into sin, yet, notwithstanding, they obtain forgiveness thereof, if by faith in Christ they be raised up again; who would not that we should drive away, but seek out and bring home the straying and lost sheep, &c. Therefore, God forbid that I should straightway judge those which are weak in faith and manners to be profane and unholy, if I see that they love and reverence the Word of God, come to the supper of the Lord, &c. For these God hath received, and counteth them righteous, through the remission of sins;—to him they stand or fall, &c.

Wherefore, with great rejoicing I give thanks to God, for that he hath abundantly, and above measure, granted that unto me which I so earnestly desired of him when I was a monk; for he hath given unto me the grace to see, not one, but many saints; yea, an infinite number of true saints; not such as the sophisters have devised, but such as Christ himself and his apostles do describe. Of the which number I assure myself to be

one. For I am baptized, and I do believe, that Christ is my Lord, by his death hath redeemed and delivered me from all my sins, and hath given to me eternal righteousness and holiness. And let him be holden accursed, whosoever shall not give this honour unto Christ, to believe, that by his death, his Word, &c. he is justified and sanctified.

Wherefore, rejecting this foolish and wicked opinion concerning the name of saints, (which in the time of Popery and ignorance we thought to pertain only to the saints which are in heaven and in earth, and to the hermits and monks which did certain great and strange works,) let us now learn, by the holy Scriptures, that all they which faithfully believe in Christ are saints. The world hath in great admiration the holiness of Benedict, Gregory, Bernard, Francis, and such like; because it heareth that they have done in outward appearance, and in the judgment of the world, certain great and excellent works. Doubtless Hilary, Cyrill, Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine and others were saints also, which lived not so strait and severe a life as they did, but were conversant amongst men, and did eat common meats, drank wine, and used cleanly and comely apparel; so that in a manner, there was no difference between them and other honest men, as touching the common custom and the use of things necessary for this life, and yet were they to be preferred far above the other. These men taught the doctrine and faith of Christ sincerely and purely, without any superstition; they resisted heretics, they purged the church from innumerable errors, their company and familiarity was comfortable to many, and especially to those which were afflicted and heavy-hearted, whom they raised up and comforted by the Word of God. For they did not withdraw themselves from the company of men, but they executed their offices even where most resort of people was. Contrariwise, the other, not only taught many things contrary to the faith, but also were themselves the authors and first inventors of many superstitions, errors, abominable ceremonies, and wicked worshippings. Therefore, except

at the hour of death, they laid hold of Christ and reposed their whole trust in his death and victory, their strait and painful life availed them nothing at all.

These things sufficiently declare, who be the true saints indeed, and which is to be called a holy life; not the life of those which lurk in caves and dens, which make their bodies lean with fasting, which wear hair, and do other like things with this persuasion and trust, that they shall have singular reward in heaven above all other Christians; but of those which be baptized and believe in Christ, which put off the old man with his works, but not at once; for concupiscence and lust remaineth in them so long as they live, the feeling whereof doth hurt them nothing at all, if they suffer it not to reign in them, but subdue it to the Spirit.

This doctrine bringeth great consolation to godly minds, that when they feel these darts of the flesh wherewith Satan assaileth the Spirit, they should not despair; as it happeneth to many in the Papacy, which thought that they ought to feel no concupiscence of the flesh; whereas notwithstanding, Hierome, Gregory, Benedict, Bernard, and others, (whom the Monks set before them as a perfect example of chastity and of all Christian virtues,) could never come so far as to feel no concupiscence or lust of the flesh. Yea they felt it, and that very strongly. Which thing they acknowledge and plainly confess in divers places of their books.

Therefore, we rightly confess in the articles of our belief, 'that we believe there is a holy church.' For it is invisible, dwelling in Spirit, in a place that none can attain unto; and therefore, her holiness cannot be seen, for God doth so hide her and cover her with infirmities, with sins, with errors, with divers forms of the cross and offences, that according to the judgment of reason, it is no where to be seen. They that are ignorant of this, when they see the infirmity and sins of those which are baptized, which have the Word and believe it, are by-and-by offended, and judge them not to pertain to the church. And in the meanwhile, they dream that the hermits and monks, and such other shavelings are the

church, which honour God with their lips, and worship him in vain; because they follow not the word of God, but the doctrines and commandments of men, and teach others to do the same. And because they do certain superstitious and monstrous works, which carnal reason magnifieth and highly esteemeth, therefore they judge them only to be saints, and to be the church; and in so doing, they change and turn this article of faith clean contrary, 'I believe that there is a holy church,' &c. and instead of this word 'I believe' they put in 'I see.' These kinds of righteousness and holiness of man's own devising, are nothing else but spiritual sorceries, wherewith the eyes and minds of men are blinded, and led from the knowledge of true holiness.

But thus teach we, that the church hath no spot or wrinkle, but is holy; and yet, through faith only in Christ Jesus. Again, that she is holy in life and conversation, by abstaining from the lusts of the flesh and exercise of spiritual works; but yet, not in such sort that she is delivered from all evil desires, or purged from all wicked opinions and errors! For the church always confesseth her sins, and prayeth that her faults may be pardoned; also, she believeth the forgiveness of sins. The saints therefore do sin, fall, and also err, but yet through ignorance. For they would not willingly deny Christ, nor forsake the Gospel, &c.; therefore, they have remission of sins. And if through ignorance they err also in doctrine, yet is this pardoned; for in the end they acknowledge their error, and rest only upon the truth and the grace of God offered in Christ; as Hierome, Gregory, Bernard, and others did. Let Christians then endeavour to avoid the *works* of the flesh, but the *desires* or *lusts* of the flesh they cannot avoid.

It is very profitable therefore for them to feel the unclean lusts of the flesh, lest they should be puffed up with some vain and wicked opinion of the righteousness of their own works, as though they were accepted before God for the same. The monks being puffed up with this opinion of their own righteousness, thought themselves to be so holy, that they sold their righteousness

and holiness to others, although they were convinced by the testimony of their own hearts that they were unclean. So pernicious and pestilent a poison it is for a man to trust in his own righteousness, and to think himself to be clean. But the godly, because they feel the uncleanness of their own hearts, therefore they cannot trust to their own righteousness. This feeling so maketh them to stoop, and so humbleth them, that they cannot trust to their own good works, but are constrained to fly unto Christ their mercy-seat and only succour; who hath not a corrupt and sinful, but a most pure and holy flesh, which "he hath given for the life of the world!" (John iv. 51.) In him they find a sound and perfect righteousness! Thus, they continue in humility, not counterfeit and monkish, but true and unfeigned, because of the uncleanness which yet remaineth in their flesh; for the which, if God would straitly judge them, they should be found guilty of eternal death. But because they lift not up themselves proudly against God, but with a broken and a contrite heart, humbly acknowledging their sins, and resting wholly upon the benefit of the Mediator Christ, they come forth into the presence of God, and pray that for his sake their sins may be forgiven them; God spreadeth over them an infinite heaven of grace, and doth not impute unto them their sins, for Christ's sake!

This I say, to the end that we may take heed of the pernicious errors of the Papists touching the holiness of life, wherein our minds are so wrapped, that without great difficulty we could not wind ourselves out of them. Wherefore do you endeavour with diligence, that ye may discern, and rightly judge between true righteousness and holiness, and that which is hypocritical; then shall ye behold the kingdom of Christ with other eyes, than carnal reason doth, that is with spiritual eyes, and certainly judge those to be true saints indeed, which are baptized, and believe in Christ, and afterwards, in the same faith whereby they are justified, and their sins both past and present are forgiven, do abstain from the desires of the flesh. But from these desires they are not

thoroughly cleansed, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit. Notwithstanding, these unclean and rebellious lusts do still remain in them, to this end, that they may be humbled; and being so humbled, they may feel the sweetness of the grace and benefit of Christ. So these remnants of unclean lusts and sins do nothing at all hinder, but greatly further the godly, for the more they feel their infirmities and sins, so much the more they fly unto Christ, the throne of grace; and more heartily crave his aid and succour, to wit, that he will cover them with his righteousness, that he will increase their faith, that he will endue them with his Holy Spirit, by whose gracious leading and guiding they may overcome the lusts of the flesh, that they may rule and reign not over them, but may be subject unto them. Thus true Christians do continually wrestle with sin, and yet notwithstanding in wrestling, they are not overcome, but obtain the victory.

This have I said that ye may understand, not by men's dreams, but by the word of God, who be true saints indeed. We see then how greatly Christian doctrine helpeth to the raising up and comforting of weak consciences, which treateth not of cowls, shavings, shearings, fraternities, and such like toys; but of high and weighty matters, as how we may overcome the flesh, sin, death, and the devil. This doctrine as it is unknown to justiciaries, and such as trust in their own works, so it is impossible for them to instruct, or bring into the right way, one poor conscience wandering, and going astray, or to pacify, and comfort the same when it is in heaviness, terror, or desperation.

GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR HIS DIVINE TEACHING.

PSALM CXviii. 21.

I thank thee, O Lord, that thou humblest me; and again, becomest my salvation.

These are the sacrifices, this is the worship which are offered up by the righteous, or Christians, in the New

Testament, or the gate of the Lord.—They give thanks unto God, and they celebrate and praise him by preaching, by teaching, by singing, and by confessing. And these sacrifices are twofold. The one is, when we are humbled: concerning which David thus speaks, Ps. li. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

This is the great, full, perpetual, daily, and eternal sacrifice.—When God, by his word, reproves us in all our works; when he rejects our holiness, our righteousness, our wisdom, and our strength, and pronounces them to be nothing, that we may be compelled to acknowledge ourselves to be sinners and guilty; when he brings home to us that word of his law, Rom. iii.; and when he not only reproves us by teaching, but terrifies our consciences and exercises us with tribulations of every kind, that we may be thoroughly cleansed, purged, and humbled, according to the old Adam which is under sin, until our confidence, pride, satisfaction, and hopes in our own works, and our own industry and wisdom, be wholly mortified. Which work, is indeed begun now, but will be perfected at the end of our life. He who can bear and endure this; who can continue and persevere therein; and who can celebrate and give thanks unto God for the same, firmly persuaded that God sends all these things upon him, and works them in him, with a favouring and paternal will, and with a special goodness towards him;—such an one, can truly sing this verse, “I confess,” or, “I thank thee, O Lord, that thou humblest me.” The Psalmist does not say, The devil humbleth and affecteth me; but, “THOU, THOU (saith he) humbleth me.” This is thy good, merciful, and paternal will;—that I may be humbled; and that, to my greatest good and blessedness; for, without thy will, Satan could have no power against me.

The other sacrifice is, when God afterwards comforts us, delivers us, and returns unto us, and comes as near unto our Spirit and new man, as he departs in distance from our flesh and old man; when he bestows upon us, in return, greater and fuller blessings, and gives us sure

victory over our enemies, that we may be joyful before him and in him ; as he saith, Psalm l., “ Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Sacrifice unto the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving,” &c. He that does this, sings this verse, “ I thank thee, O Lord, because thou becomest my salvation ; because thou hast holpen me with present help, and hast condescended to be my Saviour.

This also is a great, a daily, a perpetual, and an eternal, sacrifice of the godly, or the righteous, in the gate of the Lord. And this very sacrifice rejects and abolishes all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were types and figures of this sacrifice of praise. Moreover, the sacrifices of the Old Testament could be offered up as well by the ungodly, and hypocrites, as by the true saints. But these sacrifices of praise none can offer up and perform, but the godly and the righteous, or Christians. And this also experience has proved. For it is sufficiently evident, how the Jews raged in the times of the apostles, and what cruelties they exercised on this very account ;—because their own righteousness was condemned. As, in these times, our justiciaries also, who promise to themselves and others salvation upon the ground of the merit of works, exercise a brutal tyranny, because their works and wisdom are rejected. They are unwilling to be humbled. Instead of offering the sacrifice of praise, they insult the godly, load them with abuses, persecute them, and murder them ; and think, that this their cruelty and tyranny is a sacrifice and worship the most acceptable to God, John xvi.

The man, therefore, who is filled with joy sings this verse in exultation and gladness, with these feelings ; O Lord God, art not thou a wonderful and lovely God, who thus wonderfully, lovingly, and paternally defendest, governest, and guardest us ! Thou exaltest when thou humblest us : thou makest us righteous, when thou shewest us we are sinners : thou raisest us up to heaven, when thou castest us down to hell : thou givest us the victory, when thou permittest us to be overcome : thou cheerest us and makest our cup to run over with joy,

when we are under lamentation : thou strengthenest and confirmest us, when we are under suffering : thou makest us to dance and sing, when we are in tears : thou makest us wise, when thou makest us fools : thou makest us rich, when thou castest us into poverty : thou makest us kings, when thou makest us submit to be servants !— These and numberless other miracles are comprehended in this verse, and celebrated by the church in these few words : “ I thank thee, O Lord, because thou humblest me ; and again becomest my salvation ! ”

THE SAINTS' TRIUMPH OVER DEATH.

PSALM CXviii. 17.

I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

This seventeenth verse of the Psalm, “ I shall not die but live,” &c. confesses and sets forth the danger from which “ the right hand of the Lord ” delivereth the saints ; that is, from death. The saints feel death in truth when they are under the perils of death. Nor is it a sweet taste nor a pleasant draught to the flesh, when death is before their eyes and seems immediately coming upon them. Nor does death come alone, but is accompanied with sin and the law. It always brings these with it. Hence, it is quite plain, that the saints must be martyrs, or subjects of affliction : for they are compelled to be amidst perils of death, and to struggle with and fight against death. And this does not take place from tyrants and the ungodly by fire, by sword, by prisons, and the like instruments of persecution ; but it is wrought in various ways by Satan himself. For Satan hates the word of God utterly ; and therefore, cannot bear even one of those who love and teach the word. He attacks them in every way, and leaves no assault upon them untried either in life or in death. In life, he effects it by great and heavy temptations of their faith, their hope, and their love to God. By these various kinds and powers of temptations, he can so

hedge in, assault, shake, and terrify the godly heart, and hurry it into such straits of doubt and desperation, as to make it dread God, grow wrath with him, and sometimes blaspheme him : and he can bring the wretched conscience into such a state, as to make God, Satan, death, sin, hell, and all creatures, appear to it all alike, all eternal, and all its avowed enemies. Nor did either the Turk or Cæsar ever besiege any town with such impetuosity, such violence, and such fury, as that with which Satan sometimes comes upon the consciences of those who fear God.

Satan can also do this in the hour of death, if God permit him, when the godly lie down on the bed of danger, and have no hope of life. At such a time, he is a wonderful adept at increasing and exaggerating sins, and setting forth and threatening the wrath of God. He is a spirit industrious and powerful to a wonder : who, by taking advantage of some little sin, can raise an awful distress in the hearts of the godly, and set before them a very hell. For it is most true and most certain, that no one man ever truly saw his principal and greatest sins, such as, unbelief, contempt of God, his not fearing him, his not believing him, his not loving him as he ought, and such like sins of the heart. (For the greatest of all sins are those that lie in the heart.) Nor could any man fully see these without the greatest peril. And I know not whether there be any faith upon the earth, which would be able to stand before the sight of these, and not fall and despair.

And therefore it is, that God permits Satan to tempt thee upon those external and actual sins only. Even here, he can raise up in flames, and set before thee, hell and damnation in a moment, on such accounts as these :—because, perhaps, thou hast once or twice drank more than thou shouldest : or because thou hast lain in bed too long.—For these things and the like, he can so tempt thee, that, from distress of conscience and wretchedness, thou mayest bring a disease upon thy body ; and, from trouble of heart, bring thyself even into the perils of death.

And what is still worse, and more perilous, even the very best of thy works become instruments of temptation in the hands of Satan. For he can so detract from them, make nothing of them, deface them, and condemn them, and so exercise and torture thy conscience with them, that all thy sins put together could not cause thee so much trouble, and render thee so distressed, as do these thy best works, which yet are truly good works. Nay, thou wilt be made to wish that thou hadst wrought real and foul sins, instead of doing those good works. And what the devil aims at in this, is, to make thee cast away those works, as if God had not wrought them in thee ; or, as if they were not done by the grace and help of God ; that thus, thou mightest blaspheme God. And then, death is close by thy side ; nay, hell itself !

But who can enumerate all the arts, devices, and traps of Satan, whereby he can paint out, present, and set before our eyes sin, death, and hell ? This is his very trade and work, and he has now practised it for more than 5000 years, and can prove himself to be a consummate proficient in that art. He knows it too well, and too perfectly ; for he has been during so many years the prince and author of death. He has practised this art from the very beginning of the world ; so that he now well knows how to prepare and present to a terrified conscience, a well-timed draught of death. The prophets, and especially David, knew that, and deeply experienced it. For they so complain, teach, and speak of those temptations, that they by no means obscurely show, that they most deeply and very frequently conflicted with them ; while they cry out at one time concerning the gates of death, at another concerning hell, at another concerning the wrath of God.

Nevertheless, how, and at what time soever this may happen unto us, we here find, that the saints must contend with Satan and fight with death ; whether occasion for this fight be given by a persecutor, or by a pestilence, or any other diseases or perils of life. But in these contests, these strugglings, and these fights, **nothing**

is better, nothing more wise, no way more quick or more effectual to obtain the victory, than for the person to learn to sing this song of the saints; to deny himself, and to lay hold of, cleave to, and rest on, the "right hand of the Lord." By this stratagem, Satan is deceived and his attempt is frustrated. And nothing can gall him so much, as when he loses all his labour and pains, and finds that, 'instead of grasping an ear, he has got nothing but chaff.' And this victory is effected by this means, and in this way;—when I am willing to be nothing; when I take nothing on myself; when I depend upon no strength or help of my own, or of any other creature, but flee to the Lord God, and make him my strength and my courage; and when I trust to his grace and power. When I do this, then I am truly stript of myself and of all that I can call mine; and can say, why temptest thou me, Satan? What dost thou want to do? Dost thou want to blacken and reprove my good works and my righteousness before God? If thou dost, thou dost nothing but vainly spill water upon the ground: for I have no righteousness of my own. My strength is not mine. The Lord is my strength, my fortitude, and my victory. Here! come here! pluck the hairs out of the palm of my hand, and take the money out of my empty purse? And, if thou wantest to accuse me of my sins, in this again thou labourest in vain. I have no sins. In this also the Lord is my strength. Accuse that as long as thou wilt, until thou art tired and hast had enough of it. I will not know any sin nor any holiness in myself. I will know nothing, nothing, I say, but the strength of God in me!

He who can thus deny, put off, make nothing of, and be ignorant of himself; who can thus mock and spit in the face of Satan, and deceive him with an empty purse; he can, truly, well and safely take care of himself. He need fear no danger, who can thus mock and insult the devil; as a certain householder once did, who was in extreme necessity, and poorer than a Codrus or an Irus, and who laughed at and jeered a thief that he once caught in his house; saying, 'Ah poor miserable

fool, what wantest thou here? Dost thou expect to find any thing here in the dead of the dark night? If thou dost, thy hopes will be all deceived; for I cannot see or find any thing here in the broad day-light.'—And what is the use of Satan's trying and tempting, where he finds a soul so brought to nothing in itself, that it is not able to give him any answer as to either its sins, or its holiness? In vain he tries all his arts; in vain he multiplies and exaggerates its sins; in vain he defaces its good works; when it betakes itself in this way, to the "right hand of the Lord." He dares not assault, run upon, and tempt that "right hand:" so far is it from possibility that he should prevail against it.

But if thou leave this song, and depart from it, and Satan catch thee in thy sins or in thy good works; if thou enter into a dispute with him, and descend to contend with him; if thou wait to hear him, and desire to see what he will bring against thee; he will so treat thee, so exercise thee, so agitate, torment, and crucify thee according to his own will and lust, that thou wilt not know where thou art; thou wilt forget the right hand of the Lord, and wilt thus lose all things.

But, as we have heard, here is the labour, here the exercise, here the skill,—to be able to deny one's self. This cannot be learnt so easily or so quickly: for in the attainment unto this knowledge, we must spend the whole of our lives, as all the saints have done before us, and as all must do who are now living, and who shall come after us. For as we still feel sins, so must we still feel death. And as we must fight to be delivered from sins, and that we may cleave close to the right hand of God which his Word sets forth unto us; so must we fight and contend with death and with Satan, the prince or potentate of death, until we get into perfect liberty. For see, and observe, how this verse sets forth and describes that battle and that contest. Satan, or some persecutor, threatens death to the saints. But what do the saints? They turn away their eyes, yea themselves altogether, from the sight of death; they put off themselves entirely, make themselves nothing, and lay

hold of the right hand of God and cleave to it; and say, "I shall not die," as thou Satan, or thou tyrant threatenest me with death, and declarest and thinkest that I shall die. Thou liest, I say; "I shall not die but live." But I do not speak of my own, or of human works. I will know nothing now of myself, or of my holiness, but of the works of God. They are what I now look to. It is them that I have now before me. I speak of them. I boast of them. I declare them. I place and rest all my confidence in them. It is God who delivers me from sins and from death. If thou canst overthrow these works, and this right hand, then thou wilt overthrow me!

Thus, this verse comprehends those two things contained in the sixth and seventh verses:—*consolation* and *salvation*: or, that help which God bringeth to the godly and the righteous. And here, you see how it is that the right hand of God animates, raises up, and establishes their hearts; and so powerfully comforts them in the midst of death, that they can say, Though I die, yet I do not die. Though I suffer, yet I do not suffer. Though I fall, yet I do not utterly fall, I do not give up, I do not perish. Though I am confused and loaded with ignominy, yet I am not confused and loaded with ignominy.—Here is the *consolation*!

Moreover, he speaks of the *salvation* thus:—"but I shall live." And is not this salvation and this help wonderful?—When dying, he lives! When suffering, he rejoices! When falling, he rises up! When loaded with the greatest ignominy, he enjoys the highest glory and honour! So Christ also saith, John xi. "He that believeth in me shall never die," And, "Though he were dead, yet shall he live." So also speaketh the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. iv. "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed: persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed." These words cannot be understood by a natural and carnal heart.

Here then you see, that this consolation and salvation are life eternal, which is the true and eternal blessing of God: and this the whole Psalm intimates.

For as the Psalmist distinctively separates the company of those who fear God, from those three classes of men; and as he ascribes to those three classes of men, all things which are in this life upon earth; that is, to the first, political administration, or earthly rule; to the second, administration in spiritual things or ecclesiastical rule; to the third, the use and enjoyment of all creatures and all good things; it of necessity follows, that, that blessing, namely, another life, that is, eternal life, is given to the remaining small company of those that fear God. And seeing that those three classes or kinds of men envy this small company the blessings and enjoyments of this life, and tear them from them; it is necessary, that this their consolation be eternal consolation, and that this their salvation be eternal salvation. And what else can it be but eternal salvation, when they can boast of, and glory in, the Lord himself, above and beyond all those good things of princes and of men, in which those others abound? For the Lord is an eternal good!

And any one can easily collect, determine, and prove within himself, that where the heart feels that it has God favourable to it, there must be remission of sins. And if sins be taken away, then death is taken away. And where this is the case, there must be a consolation, and a persuasion of eternal righteousness and eternal life. This is a certainty of all certainties!

We must therefore observe in this verse, a singular skill; where the Psalmist so intrepidly, and so powerfully, drives away and removes death from his eyes, where he will not allow himself to know any thing of sins or of death, and where he so diligently sets and fixes life before his eyes, that he will know nothing whatever but life. And he who lives for ever, never sees death; as Christ saith, John iii. "He that heareth my word, shall never see death."

Thus he throws himself entirely into the ocean of life, that death may be wholly swallowed up of life, and may utterly disappear. And this takes place, from his cleaving unto the "right hand" of God with a steady

faith. Thus it is that all the saints have sung this verse, and thus it is that all the saints ought to sing it down to the last day. But we see this more particularly in the holy martyrs. Here, before the world, they seem to expire and die: but yet, their heart with a firm faith says, "I shall not die but live." Whenever therefore the saints, either in the Psalms or in any other part of the scripture, call upon God; whenever they pray for consolation and help; the things their hearts are upon, are, eternal life, and the resurrection from the dead. All those petitions and scriptures have reference to the resurrection from the dead, and to eternal life; yea, to the whole of the third part of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal life. This must be diligently observed. And all these things flow from those words of the commandment, "I am the Lord thy God:" these few words, comprehend most fully that third part of the Creed. For when the saints complain that they die and are afflicted, in this life; and when they console themselves with the hope, not of this, but of another life, yea, with the hope of God himself who is above and beyond this life; it is impossible that they can die, or not enjoy eternal life; and that, not only because God, to whom they cleave, and in whom they place all their hope and expectation, cannot die, and because they must therefore live in and through him; but because, God cannot be the God of those who are dead or who are nothing, but must be the God of the living, as Christ saith; and therefore, they must live for ever. For, if God did not live for ever, he could not be the true God and their God, nor could they cleave unto him. Hence death is not death to the saints, but a sleep.

And if this be true; if they live in God; then this, of necessity, also follows; — that they have remission of sins. And if their sins be forgiven them, then it is certain they have the Holy Ghost whereby they are sanctified. And if they be sanctified, or saints, then they are the true and holy church, and that "little flock" of

Christ which shall overcome the power of Satan, rise again, and live for ever. Behold! these are the great and glorious works of the "right hand of the Lord!" And what, I pray you, are all the works of men and potentates, in which the whole world trusts, compared with these! They are "spiders webs," as Isaiah saith; which cannot be made garments, nor any thing else wherewith a man may cover himself; and which are of no other use, than to catch wandering and foolish flies and gnats, that is, vain spirits and souls, that they may perish in eternal death!

Moreover, the saints not only live in the life to come, but also begin to live here by faith. For where-soever there is faith, there eternal life is begun. And the passages of scripture concerning faith, have reference to all those articles above-mentioned. For in those first three classes, there is no need of faith, as to this present life, because the ungodly enjoy this life to the full. Nor can faith cleave to, and rest on, any thing that is of moment or value in this life; for it always goes forth and mounts higher, and cleaves to that which is above and beyond this life, even to God himself.

And that the saints enter upon eternal life in this life, and live even in death, is taught also by this verse; where it says, "and I shall declare the works of the Lord:" for he who shall declare the works of the Lord must be alive. But the spirit and blood of the dead also celebrate the works of the Lord, and proclaim them. Thus the blood of Abel "cried out" against Cain, Gen. iv. And, Heb. xi. we read that Abel, "being dead, yet speaketh." But this verse greatly offends tyrants, more than any other in the scriptures;—that those, whom they suppose to be dead, silent, and altogether forgotten, should now more than ever begin to live and to speak. And indeed they say the truth, when they say, that it is not safe to mock and trifle with the saints, if, when they are dead they then more immediately enter upon, execute, and promote that, for the doing of which they were killed out of the way, and never cease; and, especially, seeing that they cannot be killed or have their

mouths stopped again, but will declare the works of the Lord to all eternity !

The Pope burnt John Huss, and many other saints and excellent men ; and lately also Leonard Keiser, and a great many more men who truly feared God. But, I pray you, what advantage did he procure to himself by so doing? His endeavours were of great service to him, indeed ! and he stopped their mouths to great effect ! For does not their blood now cry out against the Pope, without cessation? And has it not hitherto so effectually cried out, that the Pope has lost nearly all his power, and is compelled to become a beggar, and to implore the help of others, even the assistance of kings and princes, over whom, before, he held such absolute sway that he actually trampled them under his feet? And had not those kings, princes, and potentates, come to his help, and propped up his tottering kingdom, that poor miserable beggar would long ago have been a prey to the worms. But however, that he begged for help and wretched assistance, will little profit him after all. For, at length, he shall be deserted by all, and shall be compelled to acknowledge John Huss his conqueror, and himself conquered by him !

VERSE 18.

The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.

In this 18th verse of this triumphal song, the Psalmist displays a wonderful skill : that is, a rhetorical confutation, humiliation, and interpretation. “The Lord hath chastened me sore, (saith he) but he hath not given me over unto death.” What is the meaning of this? He glories that he “shall not die but live.” But the flesh, the world, men, and princes declare the contrary : and their clamours confuse and torture the godly man’s heart, and try to break his spirit and to drive him to despair. Aha, say they, is this your living, when you are burnt, when your head is taken off, when you are drowned, murdered, condemned, and exterminated? If

you have any senses at all, you now feel whether being in this state be living or not ! Where is now thy God ? Let your Elias save you now if he will have you ! —let him come and save you now !

Against these bitter taunts of the ungodly he encourages his mind, and suffers not himself to be weakened and moved from his holy purpose, but consoles himself thus.—Let me die as much as I may, yet that death is nothing. It is only my Father's rod. It is not his wrath, but (as the Germans say) 'a fox's brush : ' that is, a gentle chastisement which causes no pain. It is no proof of severity or of anger. The Lord does not by it declare any thing severe or cruel. But he chastises me in this manner, as a father chasteneth his son whom he loveth. This death is not indeed sweet or pleasant to the flesh, but bitter. It does not taste of honey, but of gall. It is I know a rod : but which, so far from bringing me into real death, translates me into real and eternal life !

And is there not here a wonderful interpreter, and a firm confuter of objections ? Is it not a wonderful turn and blessed interpretation, to make of the word, *death*, a saving and life-giving rod ? No one can teach this skill, but the Holy Spirit and the right hand of God. For no one can describe how the flesh is thrown into perturbation, tortured, distressed, and grieved ; when, to these corporal murderings, pains, and dire afflictions, there are added insults, jeers, taunts, scoffings, and abuses ; and when the wicked, by wagging their heads, and by virulent abuse, agitate and revile the saints, as the Jews did Christ when he hung upon the cross.—Flesh and blood will do just the contrary. They will judge the rod, which is wholesome and beneficial, to be death and hell. They fall immediately into unbelief, and go into desperation, even when left to want a loaf of bread only. But this is not a right and spiritual interpretation. The far greater and more glorious skill is, to be enabled, when the devil, while death, not a common but a dreadful and most horrid death, is before the eyes, irritates and galls the heart of the godly with such taunts and jeers as those with which he tortured Job and number-

less other saints ; then, I say, the far greater and more glorious skill is, to be enabled to sing this verse, “ I shall not die but live ! ” “ He will not give me over unto death ! ” For Satan can render death horribly bitter, fearful, and dreadful to the godly heart. Because, when he tempts, he does not say, as man would say, Thou shalt be cast into the fire : Thou shalt be drowned in the water : Thou shalt have thy head taken off, &c. : but he exaggerates and augments all things to the greatest degree : he terrifies the godly with the sight of death : he paints it forth as being horrible, terrible, cruel, eternal, and having no end : and he exaggerates, at the same time, the wrath and indignation of God above measure : and, by horrid manœuvres, impresses it upon the heart. Thus, he butchers the man, torturing him, and overwhelming him with these cruel cogitations so horribly, bitterly, and incredibly, that such temptations cannot be overcome or endured by any human powers whatever.

Here the man must be a good interpreter, who may be able to sing this verse, and by it overcome and beat off Satan, and say, Death is not, no, it is not, a proof of an angry mind, but a discipline of mercy and a fatherly chastisement. I am surely persuaded, that my God will not give me over unto death. Nor will I ever believe, or ever allow myself to be persuaded, that he is angry with me, éven if all the devils in hell should get around me together, and declare it with the loudest bawlings : nay, if even an angel from heaven should tell me so, I would say “ let him be accursed : ” farther, if God himself should tell me so, yet would I firmly believe, that I was only tried by him in the same manner as he tried Abraham ; and that he only made and appeared as though he were somewhat angry, but that, in truth and in deed, he was not angry with me. For God never recals or alters his word, but commands me to be persuaded in myself, and to say, “ The Lord chasteneth me, but he doth not given me over unto death. ” I will not suffer this to be taken from me, nor will be persuaded, or suffer my case to be interpreted otherwise. This I will firmly be-

lieve : this I will keep fixed in my mind : not one shall pluck this from me.

Thus the Psalmist, though he feels death, yet will not feel it ; nor will he suffer it to be called death ; but he lays hold of the right hand of the mercy of God, and cleaves unto it. He does not however deny that death is sent upon him of God, but there is a sweet and silent understanding between God and himself. And that understanding between them is such, that death is not called death, nor is death, but that fatherly rod and discipline by which the sons are chastised. All these are truly singular and wonderful words, which are not to be found in, nor indeed can enter into, the hearts either of men or of princes. So the apostle Paul saith, 1 Cor. ii. that he is speaking of wisdom “in secret” and “in a mystery :” which none of the princes of this world knew.—Thus have I spoken upon this glorious canticle and triumphal song of the saints !

S E R M O N S

OF

Martin Luther.

SERMON I.

THE LOST SHEEP.

LUKE XV.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the pharisees and scribes murmured; saying, &c.

IN this most sweet Gospel, is contained that doctrine which we boast of and glory in as our chief doctrine, and which deserves more especially to be called the christian doctrine: namely, concerning grace and the remission of sins: which stands in opposition to the doctrine of the law and of works. And it is a consideration the most awful, that a sermon so blessed, and full of consolation and joy, should be heard with indifference by the man who is hardened in sin, and despises the word of God. And still more awful is it, that this same sermon should be so learnt by all in a moment, that there should be no one who does not think himself master of it; and imagine, that there is nothing in it but what he knows perfectly well, and that therefore he needs waste no more study in learning it. Though it is no molestation to God himself, nor is he tired or wearied with dwelling upon it yearly, or rather, exercising it daily, as though he knew not how to preach any thing else, but was unacquainted with and ignorant of all other things whatever. And yet, we poor, miserable, wretched creatures, so soon arrive at the height of this knowledge, that we immediately become wearied and loathe the repetition: and thus, all appetite and love for the divine word die in us and are extinguished.

But however, before we explain the subject matter herein contained, I think we should do right to touch upon the beginning of this chapter; which St. Luke gives as a kind of introduction; shewing, what it was that occasioned these words to be spoken by our Saviour. He says, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." By which words he plainly shews, with what kind of men Christ was then conversing; namely, with those who lived openly as they ought not, and were publicly called sinners and ungodly. Hence, as it would appear, the pharisees had a very weighty reason for murmuring against Christ; who, while he wished to be considered a holy man, familiarly joined himself to such as these.

At that time, those were called "publicans" to whom the Romans let out a certain city, or revenue, or other charge, for a stated sum of money. In the same manner as the Turks or Venetians now commit any such district or charge to a certain person, from which so many pounds of revenue are to be paid annually; and whatever such officer can, by unjust levies, extort over and above that sum, he has for himself. In this manner it was that the above-mentioned publicans proceeded; who so exacted that revenue and stated sum, as to get out of it an immense gain for themselves. And when the sum of money which was to be paid out of that district or charge was great, the publicans, who were unwilling to lose their profit out of it, practised every kind of injustice in every form, and extorted from every one every where, and in every way. For their employers were so avaricious, and so sharp upon them, that they could not have gotten much profit for themselves, had they acted with equity and justice, and pressed no one by unjust exactions. Hence they were held in ill-fame by all parties, as being most unjust extortioners, and persons of very little honesty and integrity of life.

In like manner the others, who were called "sinners" in general, were such as lived shameless and abandoned lives, and were sunk into every species of sin,—covetousness, debauchery, surfeiting, drunkenness, and such like.

Such were the characters that “drew near” unto Christ, and came on purpose to hear him, having before heard the fame of him,—that he was, both for his words and his works, wonderful and of great report.

Now it is very evident, that there was in these men, though desperate characters, “some good thing,” and a certain spark of honesty, that they should have a desire after Christ, wish to hear his doctrine, and try to get a sight of the works which he did; because they were fully persuaded beforehand that he was a good man, and that they could not hear any ill-report concerning either his doctrine or his works; so that, their life differed very widely indeed from his. And yet, they are so honest, that they feel no enmity against him, nor do they hate and shun his society, but they run to him; not with any evil design, but desiring to hear and see something good from him, whereby they might amend their lives.

On the contrary, the scribes and pharisees, who were considered to be most righteous and holy persons, proved to be such virulent beasts, that they were not only enraged against Christ, and could not bear either to hear or see him, but could not endure with patience that even miserable sinners should come unto him and hear him, in order that, being converted, they might repent. Nay farther, they even murmured and accused Christ for harbouring and receiving sinners: saying, Behold! this is that holy and wonderful man! Who will now say that he was sent of God, who thus associates himself with abandoned and vile wretches! Nay he is “a wine-bibber and a glutton, (as they said upon another occasion,) a friend of publicans and sinners!”

Such a name is he compelled to bear by the holy pharisees; not because, being given to gluttony and surfeiting, he was accustomed both to feasting and riotous pleasure with them; but only, because he admitted such into his familiarity, and did not contemptuously spurn them from him. For, according to their opinion, he ought to have been of a miserable appearance and clad in vile raiment, to have remained secluded from the so-

ciety of men, and to have shunned all intercourse with them, lest he should be contaminated by their presence; as they themselves, after the manner of holy men, always lived. Concerning whom Isaiah saith, that they studied purity so much, that they dreaded the touch of a sinner, and always said, "stand by." The same also is clearly seen in the pharisee, Luke vii. who murmured against Christ, because he openly allowed himself to be touched by a woman who was a sinner. And these were they who always wished to be his instructors, and to prescribe to him rules for living and conducting himself holily in this life. And therefore, they murmur upon this occasion also, because he did not join himself unto them; and did not, after their example, keep himself aloof from intercourse and conversation with such sinners.

But here Christ is also a little pertinacious, and by no means obscurely declares, that he can suffer the mastery of none, but is altogether free and exempt from all laws whatever. So we see every where in the Gospels, he always does every thing at his own will and pleasure: and yet, nevertheless, is the most mild, most gentle, and the most ready to serve of all men. But whenever they wished to interfere with him concerning laws, and to become his teachers, then all this kind friendship is at an end; he starts back like a diamond applied to, or struck against a whetstone; and says and does nothing, but the directly contrary to that which they require of him; even though they may speak well and rightly, and produce, in confirmation of what they say, the very word of God. As they do here: where they come to him and say, 'Thou oughtest to do thus and thus. Thou oughtest to seek the society of holy men. Thou oughtest to flee the company of sinners.' This indeed is a doctrine of some weight, and confirmed by the testimony of scripture. For Moses himself commanded the Jews that they should avoid the ungodly, and put away evil from among them. With this text they corroborate what they say, and come forward with their Moses; wishing to make even Christ himself subject to their laws, and to rule him by them.

But whether human or divine laws be brought forward, he will stand in his own liberty. And he is not altogether unlike the unicorn ; which beast, as they say, can never be taken alive, in what way soever he be hunted. He will suffer himself to be pierced through, to be wounded with darts, and to be killed, but will never submit to be taken. Just in the same way does Christ act ; who, although he be attacked with laws, yet will not suffer them, but bursts through them as through a spider's web, and most severely rebukes his opposers. So also, Matt. xii. where they made it to be a great crime in his disciples that they plucked the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, citing the divine command, that the sabbath was to be kept holy, &c. he asserts the directly contrary, does away the commandment, and affirms that which is the opposite to the scriptures and their examples. So also, Matt. xvi. when he tells his disciples that he shall suffer and be crucified, and when Peter with a good intention admonishes him and sets before him the commandment of love, saying, " that be far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee," he, in reply, sharply and severely reproves and rebukes his adviser ; and says, " Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

In a word : He is most impatient of all laws concerning which they treat with him, and will be entirely free from all precepts, and be accounted the Lord of them all. He always answers in a manner that cuts them off at once, and will not hold any law as being compelled to keep it. But on the other hand, when he does any thing freely, then, there is no law so small or so trifling, that he will not obey willingly and do much more than it requires. Therefore, there is no one to be found more kind or ready to serve than he, if he be bound by no mastery or compulsion. Nay, he humbles himself so low as even to wash and kiss the feet of Judas his betrayer, and himself covers his disciples for the night ; (as his history witnesses, and which is very probable, and agreeable to the manner in which he

speaks of himself, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," &c.) Unto this indeed the works of the law are necessary, but not such as are extorted by the law, or by means of the law. This is manifest to all who behold his life every where, as he went about in Judæa, in Samaria, and in Galilee, sleeping at night on the ground, fasting forty days, enjoying no quiet whatever, and enduring so many labours, that they feared lest he should destroy his mental faculties, or utterly wear out his body. He does all he can, but refuses to be compelled, and will not suffer laws to be prescribed to him; and if any one set them before him, he recoils and opposes them most determinately. Thus he is of a spirit the most obstinate, yet the most meek: no one is more pertinacious or more devoted to serve than he: he will not endure the doing of any of those things which are exacted of him, and yet he does an abundance of all things, and, as it were, runs over with a flood of good works, and waters all things, while no one exacts or demands any thing of him by commandment or control, but he is permitted to do all willingly and of his own accord.

THESE things were done for examples unto us, that we might learn what a true Christian man, according to the Spirit is: and that we might not judge of him according to the law, nor deal with him according to the rule of our own prudence. For Christ is so our Lord, as that he makes of us men such as he is himself. And even as he cannot bear to be fettered and bound by any laws, but will be Lord over all laws, and so of all things; so also, a Christian ought not to bear in his conscience any such thing. For we are, through Christ and his baptism, brought into such liberty, that our conscience knows nothing of any law, so as to suffer itself to be under its government and control. Nor are we to have any other feeling, as to the experience of our inward conscience, than as if there never were any law either given or made; nay, as if there were neither Ten Commandments nor One Commandment; finally, as if there were no law whatever either of God, of the Pope, or of

the King; so that we may plainly say, 'I know nothing of any law whatever, nor do I want to know any.' For as to our state and experience as Christians, our own works and those of all other men cease, and also all laws. Because, where there is no work, there can be no law requiring a work, and saying, Thou must do this: Thou must not do that, &c. For we are, by baptism and the blood of Christ, free from all laws whatever, and righteous from mere grace and mercy. And this is our treasure, wherein we are Christians, and live and stand in the presence of God! For as to the manner in which we ought to live, with respect to our outward conversation, (that is our flesh and blood,) before the world, that has nothing whatever to do with this place.

Wherefore, the Christian must learn so to rule his conscience, as not to suffer it to be ensnared and led captive by any law. But whoso shall attempt to hold and bind him by any law whatever, let him boldly and firmly resist, and let him do as he sees Christ did upon the present and other occasions; where he uses such pertinacity and morose severity, that no Moses or legal exactor can do any thing with him; although, in other respects, he is of all men the most humble, the most sweet, and the most tender.

But however this is an experience above all the most high and sublime, which no one can hold fast, he excepted, who was himself the teacher of it, and who knew how to put a stop to all laws and teachers of laws. We cannot arrive at this high degree; for the devil sports with our flesh and blood, as often as he can take a man in the trap of his own conscience, and drive him to the point of entering into a dispute with him about what he has done or has not done; then, a disputing of that sort arises, in which there is a debate held concerning our sin and righteousness; and here, the man is drawn into the mire and clay of peril, where he sticks fast and is not able to help or extricate himself, but is plunged deeper and deeper. For now he is laden with a heavy load, more than he can bear; under which he goes on cogitating and foreboding, and gnawing and

drinking up his spirit, unable to attain unto any rest of mind.—This I sensibly feel in my own experience, when I cannot struggle out nor extricate myself by any labour, although I strive hard without ceasing, and turn every stone to emerge from this overwhelming flood, so as to be able to answer the demands of the law, and cause it to be quiet, and say, Now thou hast done enough, and I am constrained to be content. But all these strivings and devoted endeavours, are in vain : for these floods and gulphs are of that kind, that no one can ever emerge from them, though he should call into his aid the help of all men : as all those can bear me witness, who have been brought to know these things by experience, and who still experience them daily.

The cause of this is our nature : which will ever have to do with works and laws, and will hear what they say, and follow those who say, “ Why eateth he with publicans and sinners ? ” If he would eat and drink with us, indeed, he would do right. And again, “ Why do thy disciples pluck the ears of corn on the sabbath-day ? ” &c. And it will thus deal with the law until it shall say, Now thou art righteous. For it can attain to no higher understanding than that the doctrine of the law is the highest doctrine, and that righteousness the best kind of life before God. And in this opinion nature remains bound a perpetual captive ; nor does it know how to deliver itself from this prison, not being able to pacify and stop the mouth of the law, so as to prevent its making any demand or alleging any accusation ; but it is compelled to remain captive under the law in a perpetual prison ; and the more it struggles and contends with it, in the worse state it is ; and at last it is by it utterly vanquished.

What, therefore, am I to do when the law attacks and presses upon my conscience, especially when I feel that I have not done what it requires ? I answer : That which Christ does here : who admits of, and acknowledges, no law, even though it be drawn from the law of God. Do thou also learn to do this, that thou mightest with confidence say to the law, ‘ Cease, O law, to contend

with me, I have nothing at all to do with thee. And I will not hear thee for this very reason:—because thou comest to dispute with, and to inquire of me how good and how righteous I am. For it matters not at all what I am, what I ought to do or ought not to do, but what Christ himself is, what he gives, and what he has done. For we are now in the bride-chamber, where the bridegroom and the bride are entirely alone: thou hast no business to enter there, nor to interfere with one word.' Yet still the law will continue to assail and say, 'Nevertheless thou must do good works, and keep the Commandments, if thou wilt be saved.' Here again answer: 'But thou art told there is no room for thee to attack me concerning them; for I have gotten my righteousness, and the sum of all my salvation, without any of my own works, in Christ Jesus my Lord; and I was saved long before thou ever camest unto me; therefore I have no need of thy presence at all.' For, as I have said above, where works are of no avail, there neither can the law be of any weight or moment; and where there is no law there can be no sin. Therefore the spouse is to reign with Christ alone in the bride-chamber, all others being shut out; in whom she has all things in one treasure, and wants no one thing more as necessary unto salvation. Wherefore, the law, together with its trumpets and drums, is to be excluded, to be spued out of the mouth, and to be utterly cast away as often as it comes to invade and attack the conscience. For it has nothing to do there, nor does it come at all in season, when it wishes to make a great bustle where it has no business to make any, nor even in the least to intrude itself. For here we are upon this article which is called 'I believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, who suffered for me, died, and was buried,' &c.: in whom all laws, kingly, Mosaic, and divine, ought to believe. Therefore I am boldly to shun every thing that would dispute with me concerning sin, righteousness, or any such things.

BEHOLD this is the liberty that Christ would shadow forth to us in this place:—that, as Christians, we should

suffer no master to rule in our conscience, most steadily cleaving to this one thing:—that we are baptized, called unto Christ, and justified and sanctified through him : so that we can say, ‘ Here is my righteousness, here is my treasure, here are my works : in a word, here is my every thing to answer the sin and unrighteousness of which the law strives to accuse me. If thou wilt have any other righteousness, works, law, or sin, then thou mayest seek them where thou canst ; thou certainly wilt not find them in me.’ In this way a man may be able to defend himself, and to stand against the suggestions and temptations of the devil, either concerning sins past or sins present.

Wherefore, Moses and Christ are to be kept far asunder ; and also works and faith ; and conscience and outward life. So that, if the law will attack me and press down my heart, then is the time for casting away the law ; and, if he will not go away, of thrusting him away by force ; and saying, willingly will I do good works and promote them with all my power, as long as I live among men ; but here, in my conscience, I will not hear any thing whatever concerning them ; therefore in this let be alone, and do not want to pester me at all about them. For in this respect, I will not descend to hear either of Moses or of the pharisees ; but baptism, and Christ only, shall here have power to reign. And, like Mary, my desire is to sit at his feet to hear his words. But let Martha remain without if she will, and busy herself about the things of the house and kitchen. And, in a word, I will not have my peace of conscience disturbed.

But do I not in the mean time sin daily, which certainly is not righteous ? And how about this ? I answer : It is true. I am a sinner, and do unrighteously ; but I am not therefore to despair : much less am I to run away down into hell, or to be terrified by the severity of the law. Because, I have still a righteousness and works far above, and able to stand against, Moses. I apprehend him who has apprehended me ; and I cleave unto him who has embraced me in baptism ; and put me

into his bosom ; and who, by the proclamation of the Gospel, calls me to partake of all the benefits there are in him, commanding me to believe in him.—Whensoever I can feel out him, then I command the pharisees and Moses with all their tables, the lawyers with all their books, and all men with their works, to hold their tongues and depart. Here the law has no right to accuse or to act. For, in this Christ, I have an abundance of all things that can be required of me.—This I say is the doctrine and skill of Christians ; pertaining, however, to that part only where Christ ought to reign.

BUT here, thick-headed men have no understanding : presuming only to take unto themselves, from this, a licence to live as they list : saying, What need is there then for me to do good works, seeing that Christ has done away with the law, &c. ? But this their vain prating is not to be borne : for thou art also to look at Christ in the other point of view, and to observe what he does farther. For he here says himself, that he is a man who goeth about seeking the miserable and lost sheep : of which, he gives a full proof upon the present occasion, by receiving publicans and sinners, and preaching unto them. And here you will see, that he this same person does much more than ever the law commanded ; and he teaches thee, by his own example, to do the same. He is of such arrogance that he will not be under the law, and yet, spontaneously does more than ever the law demands. Do thou also likewise ; and wait not until the law shall impel and force thee, but, without the law, of thine own accord, do what thou oughtest to do ; as Peter, 1 Epist. ii. admonishes, saying, “ As free and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” And Paul also, Rom. vi. “ Being then made free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness.”—These are they who do all things with a free conscience, without the law, and without compulsion !

For wherever the Gospel is in the heart, in truth, it maketh the man such, that he does not wait until the law come to him, but he is so full of gladness in Christ,

that he is carried forth into good works ; and, without any unwillingness, but with spontaneous freedom, does good unto all with all his power, before ever the law comes into his mind. Nay, he spends his body and-whole life to do it, not at all regarding what he has to suffer. He is so full of good works, that they flow, as it were, from a perpetual fountain, and water many. Thus Christ would not even pick up a straw by compulsion, but where there was no compulsion, he offers himself to be affixed to the cross for me, and for the whole world, and dies for the lost sheep.—These, if I mistake not, may be called works !

Wherefore, it is necessary to the utmost, to understand these things :—that, when matters come to the point and within gun-shot, as it were, when the law and sin enter into dispute with the conscience, then we are to take care to stop the mouth of the law boldly, and to command him to hold his peace, by thrusting him out of doors to dispute with our old man. He it is that is to be driven into the school of Moses, that he may dispute with him and say, ‘ Dost thou hear me ? Thou art too sluggish in giving and in serving thy neighbour. When thou oughtest to be praising Christ, thou art more inclined to drink a bottle of wine. And rather than expose thyself to perils for Christ, thou wouldst be employed in taking an unfair advantage of thy neighbour, and in robbing him as far as thou canst.’—Upon this sluggish ass, that is unwilling to labour, and would rather indulge in ease and carnal pleasure, thou art to use the “ tables of stone ; ” by which thou mightest compel him, against his will and inclination, to go forward in his duty.

Whenever therefore Moses may attack me, I am to say to him, (as far as is right and proper) I will willingly hear thee in order to follow thy precepts ; that is, as far as respects my hands and external life, where thou mayest reign as a schoolmaster, or a master of a family. Thou hast moreover the power of commanding me to be obedient, modest, patient, kind to my neighbour, liberal and ready to serve the poor, to glorify God, and be spent in sounding his praises ; and that I should

expose myself to the contempt and reproach of all for his word's sake, and should suffer every kind of injury from the world. At all which things I am not greatly moved, being ready to do even more than I can do as to my outward man. "For the spirit (according to the testimony of Christ) is willing," yea, more than willing, though the flesh be weak. Thus, he suffers himself to be circumcised, to minister in the temple, to be scourged, to be crucified; of which, nevertheless, he had no need, nor had the law any right to demand such things of him.

But if thou, Moses, wilt advance any farther, and where it is unlawful for thee to come, that is, into my heart and conscience, there I will not look at thee, nor condescend to hear thee. For there, I have another treasure great and unspeakable, which is called, Christ, together with his baptism. And, in a word, whatever pertains to the restraining of the outward man, thou canst not with too much weight lay upon me; but thou must lay nothing upon my conscience. For wherever there is the Spirit bringing Christ unto us, he more than fulfils all laws: as Paul saith, "The law was not made for a righteous man:" who, nevertheless, fulfils it more than ever he could do in the flesh. For, according to the law, we are all sinners; and, as far as concerns our carnal person, we must remain under the law. But, through Christ and baptism, we are exalted far above the law.

WHEREFORE, Moses must enforce his heavy works out of Christ, whereby he may compel those who are not yet Christians to be civilly moral before the world. But he cannot make Christians righteous and just. This, however, I will not deny, but he may do—he may shew unto men their duties: to which they will willingly assent, and will fulfil them, and will even do more: except that, the flesh will not so willingly, and with that alacrity which it ought, obey the spirit. On which account, they also are to be admonished and urged; their conscience, nevertheless, still remaining free, so that the law shall have no power to accuse them. Wherefore, in Christianity, such kind of doctrine

and admonition ought to be maintained, (which, it is certain the apostles also maintained,) whereby every one is to be admonished of his condition and his duty. But the rest who are not Christians, are to be ruled by the laws of Moses, and to be laden with them both externally and internally ; in order that they may be so forced and pressed by them, as to be compelled to do what is right even against their wills. Of which kind of men are that rash herd of the licentious multitude, and that incorrigible vulgate, who regard not nor understand the Christian liberty, although they can boast of and prate much about the Gospel, and yet only abuse it unto their own mind's lust ; let them, I say, know, that the discipline and rod of Moses belongs to them. For such men are not in a state to be able to receive this doctrine : because they are in that hardened security of mind, that they think they have no need of the Gospel, or that they know it well enough. Those only are in a state to receive it, who are sunk into a disputing with their conscience, the law, their sins, and the wrath of God : under a meditation on which things, they are afraid, feeling their hearts to say within them, Alas ! Alas ! how destructively have I spent my life ! What account shall I render unto God ! And thus, they become filled with fear and trembling : while the others, remain in an awful security, and presumption, and feel neither the law, nor sin, nor any necessity. And thus, each of these characters are miserably in the wrong. For those, who ought not to have any thing to do with the law, struggle the most with it, and are the only persons who feel it. Whereas the other, by whom alone the law ought to be felt, are in no way troubled with it : nay, the more they are terrified by the law and divine wrath, the more hardened they become : and therefore, another master must be called in to correct such as these, even the destroyer and the tormentor : who may teach them, that as they will not do good as they ought for the Lord's sake, and through grace, they shall do what they ought not without the aid of any grace at all, and have for their reward hell and all its miseries.

In contrariety to these, Christ, here and every where else, (as I have said) both by doctrine and example, teaches us, who feel our sins and the burthen of the law, and who would willingly be Christians, that we should accustom ourselves to fight against the law, and to force ourselves from ourselves unto another, that we give not place to the devil ; who wants, by means of the law, to break in upon the bride-chamber of Christ, and cast himself into his place ; that is, to take away the joy and consolation of the conscience, in order that he might draw away the man into desperation, so that he may not be able to lift up his heart and face unto God with gladness. For this is the skill of Christians : and it is of the utmost concern to them to learn and know more of this than the profane and carnal vulgar know and understand, because they must be skilful in the way of fighting with the devil, and of withstanding his attacks, as often as he comes upon them and would dispute with them out of Moses. For when he is trying these stratagems, he is not to be disputed with in many words, but we must leave Moses and flee to Christ, and remain close to him. Because, what he aims at in all his stratagems and traps, is, to wrest us with subtlety away from Christ, and to drag us over to Moses. For he well knows, that if he gain that point, the victory is in his own hands.

WHEREFORE, thou must be on thy guard again and again, that he pull thee not away from that fighting-ground, nor entice thee out of that ring. And although he may set before thee many things out of the law, saying that it is the word of God, which thou oughtest to obey, thou canst then answer him, and say, ‘ Do I not tell thee that I will now know and hear nothing of the law whatever ? For we are now contending upon that ground and in that ring, in which there is no inquiry about what I ought to do or what to leave undone, but how I am to lay hold of a merciful and gracious God and the remission of sins. Here will I remain in the arms of Christ, so clinging round his neck that nothing shall tear me from him, and creeping under the cover of his

baptism, whatsoever the law may say or my heart may feel. And if I can but keep that principal part, my faith, pure, and this bulwark in safety, then will I do externally, not internally, whatever burthen of works shall be laid upon me.'

Behold ; he that could hold fast this skill would be a right and perfect man, as Christ was ; and would be so far exalted above all laws, that he might boldly call Peter Satan, and the pharisees fools and blind leaders of the blind ; he might impose silence on Moses himself, and might thus live entirely without any law ; and yet, in the mean time, be fulfilling all laws. Moreover, he might be obstinate and pertinacious against every thing that should attempt to tie and bind him, and yet, spontaneously accommodate himself, and be obedient to all. But our whole deficiency lies here.—We never attain to this skill fully and perfectly, and the devil ever opposes our endeavours, and brings us into that state that we act with a perverted order of things ;—we are always over obedient and submissively attentive to hear all things that the law may say unto us ; by the threats of which, we are thrown into total confusion ; whereas, it would have been better not to listen to it at all. On the other hand, in external things, we take too great an advantage of our liberty ; when our body ought to be restrained and kept in subjection by works, in order that it might be compelled to bear whatever it is averse to ; seeing that, it still sinneth more or less ; but yet so that the sin remaineth without, when it ought to remain, and have its Moses, who may continually present to it his requirements. But internally, no sin or law ought to rule or reign, but Christ himself should hold his empire of free grace, joy, and consolation. Thus, all things would be in their right places, and the man would be ready and prepared to every good work both to do and to suffer ; and that, with a glad and willing heart, by faith, not feigned, in the grace of God through Christ.—Wherefore, let the conscience rule over all laws, and the flesh be subject to all laws.

And now, let him that is acquainted with this skill

give thanks unto God, and see that he be not too wise in the same, and fall not into a false persuasion of knowledge. For I, and such as I am, are not yet acquainted with it as we ought to be acquainted, although we have had very great experience of, and very long exercise in it. For this skill is, as I have said, of that nature, that none can know it but those who are Christians; and they in order to attain unto it, must be learners all their lives. For as to those secure spirits, they alone pretend to know all things, and yet know nothing at all; for by this these false persuasions, they are removed the farthest of all men from the whole of the Gospel. And there can be no one thing a greater pest to, or a greater stumbling-block in the way of, Christianity, than these ape-teachers and masters, who, in their own eyes, appear to know something. For these fill every corner of the world with sects and divisions; being such characters of men, who serve neither God nor man, and hear neither the law nor the Gospel rightly; but securely condemn the former, and hear the latter with disgust; and are ever hunting, in the mean time, after some new doctrine. But however, we teach nothing here on their account, for they are not worthy of our doctrine; and they have this punishment from God;—that they never can learn this same doctrine, nor derive any advantage from it, although they hear it. Therefore, let us hold it among ourselves. They can take nothing of it from us, excepting that they may hear a certain external sound and echo of it.

This then is the FIRST PART of this Sermon which Christ here teaches us by his own example.—In what manner each one is to hold his conscience free from all disputation with the law, and from all the terror of the wrath of God and of sin.

AND NOW, my design is to enter into this beautiful and sweet sermon of Christ; where he begins and says, “What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?” Christ is not only of a pertinacious mind in

his refusing to follow their sayings and control, but also adduces probable causes for his pertinacity; thus, with great skill confuting their objections, and stopping their mouths, so that they have not a word to answer him. Nay, he convicts and circumvents them by their own example and proceeding, that he might fill them with deserved shame for daring to attack and reprove him for doing that in a matter of the utmost moment, which they themselves do upon an occasion the most trifling.

In what way could he more promptly and more effectually answer them, than by saying, Do you want, O ye excellent and very wise teachers, to teach and command me to do this:—to drive and thrust from me those who desire me, and who come unto me to hear my words? when you yourselves, having lost one sheep, leave nothing undone, leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, (that is, in the plain within the fold,) and running here and there to seek that which is lost, never ceasing from your search until ye have found it and brought it back into the fold? This your proceeding you consider meritorious and laudable, and if any one should blame you for it, you would doubtless call him a fool and a madman. And should not I the Saviour of souls do the same unto men, as you do unto a lost sheep? especially, when one soul is, beyond all comparison, of more value than all the other creatures that live and breathe upon the earth put together? Why therefore are ye not utterly ashamed of yourselves, for daring to reprove me for that act which you yourselves praise, and are compelled to praise? Wherefore, if you would reprove me, you must first reprove and condemn yourselves.

This is answering rightly, and stopping their barking mouths with honor; abundant causes being produced, why he wanted not in any respect their control, nor could by any means endure it. And they, as became them, retreat with merited disgrace, and gain nothing by their attempted mastery, but the deepest shame and ignominy. For it is a disgrace to all masters, and therefore the greatest of all abominations, when they do not

blush at arrogating so much to themselves, as to attempt to teach and admonish him of his duty, who is appointed of God master over all.

But the matter ought to end as I have said.—That he who will presume to rule and mock a Christian with his attempted mastery, and to draw him away from baptism and the doctrine concerning Christ, in order to govern him by his wisdom or laws, shall not only be made a fool, but be considered the author of the greatest abomination, yea, of murder. For such an one pollutes the holy temple of God, and, with a devilish temerity, invades his kingdom, where he alone ought to reign, together with the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, he highly deserves to be covered, as his reward, with shame and ignominy before the whole world, who assumes to himself the mastery there, where Christ only ought to be master; and thus wantonly, and to his own destruction, “kicks against the pricks.”

Wherefore, it is by no means safe to run against Christians, for they are living stones and saints. And he who is wise, will have nothing to say against that man whose name is Christ; for he will get no good by it, he being most impatient of any kind of mastery or controlling doctrine. So also, a Christian is by no means to suffer the same; for if he do suffer it, and yield to suggestions of this kind, Thou oughtest to have done this thing or that: or, Thou oughtest to do it now: then it is all over with him; he has fallen from Christ! Wherefore, we must ply all our care to hold him fast; not at all regarding if the whole world teach us otherwise. For if we remain cleaving close unto him, and hold fast the true understanding of the doctrine concerning Christ, we shall easily overcome all masters and teachers of this kind. For this Christ will be entirely free from all correction and control, and will shew himself to be the controller and corrector of all men;—that, they shall either, under grace, worship him as a Lord and Master, and shall be brought to acknowledge themselves fools; or, they shall, under his fury and indignation, be exposed to shame before all men, and perish utterly!

BUT, as I have said above, the present Sermon, on account of the great goodness, sweetness, and consolation, which it contains, is not to be prostituted to the ignorant, carnal, unhumbled multitude: (for whom I am setting forth none of these things, so that they may know my mind plainly :) but to be opened up unto those who are conflicting with distress and trouble of conscience, or who are exercised under the perils and certainty of death, and disputing with the devil about their sins committed, whereby he is trying to drive them to desperation. Before such, this lovely representation is to be exhibited, that they may receive from it consolation and gladness of spirit. But as to the rest, who live in security of mind, and know nothing about what spiritual anxiety and sorrow is, they are to be led unto the tormentor Moses, and after that, unto the very devil. For the representation which we have here, is beyond measure most sweet and amiable, and painted forth more beautifully than any Apelles could delineate it with his pencil. Nor has any one a power of language capable of setting it forth by expression: and therefore, it can only be apprehended by the faith of the heart, as far as we may be allowed to enter into it. And yet, we must say something about it, that we may open a door and a way for others to enter into it more deeply.

I, saith the Saviour, have also an hundred sheep; that is, that little simple flock of all Christians, from the number of which, one is lost and is fallen out from the communion of Christians. Wilt thou then know the love of my heart? Then thou art to use all thy ability to set forth as affectingly, and as descriptively as thou canst, a SHEPHERD and a LOST SHEEP. For the shepherd that is only man, who takes care of his flock that is created only to be killed, has yet a most affectionate inclination of mind towards his sheep, and is in no little anxiety about the way in which he shall find, and bring it back, when lost; nor has the sheep a less desire to find its shepherd; for the moment it perceives the person to be its shepherd, (for it knows him by instinctive nature,) it is not afraid

of him, but runs up to him with all confidence, and anticipates his perception filled with the assurance of hope. Nay, as soon as it hears his voice, it answers with bleating, follows him directly, and never stops till it comes up to him. And there is by nature the utmost love and affection between them both, as though their heart and feelings were the same: so that, if the sheep could speak and disclose the secret workings of its heart, it would say, that it wanted nothing but its shepherd. And on the other hand, the shepherd has the same regard and concern; only thinking about the way in which he shall again find his sheep that has strayed from him. He hurries and sends forth his servants to search for it, wherever he has any idea it may have wandered: nor does he ever cease to seek for it, until he has found it and brought it back. For he well knows, what a miserable animal a lonely sheep is; the preservation of whose life depends solely upon the help and care of the shepherd; being such an animal, as can do nothing to help itself, but must, if bereft of its shepherd, utterly perish. Nay it is in every respect a poor fearful creature, and inclined to go astray; and as soon as ever it has wandered out of the way and lost its shepherd, it is immediately in peril for its life, and can rest no where. And even though it wander near some other flock, and a strange shepherd call it, yet it still goes on its way through thorns and briers, through water and mire, until it meet with some wolf, or be swallowed up by some other destruction, and perish. But still, it has all the while that excellency and natural instinct, that it always has a rooted inclination towards its shepherd, and knows his voice immediately; and wherever it may be when it hears it, it runs directly towards the sound, and will not suffer itself to be drawn or forced away, even if the whole world call and cry after it. And although it have wandered away into by-paths in the desert, and may be thought to be lost, yet it has still that secret hope which the instinct of nature has implanted, that if it can but get to hear the voice of the shepherd, it leaps with joy, and loses every fear. Nor is

it the shepherd's intention, when he draws near, to contend with it in anger, or to ill-use it for straying, or to expose it to the wolf to be destroyed; but all his care and concern is, that he may call and allure it to himself as kindly as possible, and might treat it in the most tender manner; namely, by laying it upon his shoulders and bringing it back to the rest of the flock.

THIS is the picture presented to us under the figure of this little creature and animal: wherein, Christ shews us what the affection of his mind is towards us, what he will do for us, and what we may assure ourselves concerning him. For as it is evident that all this is true in nature, much more is it true in the kingdom of Christ, which is the kingdom of grace, love, and consolation. Wherefore, see that thou ever set before thee the sheep that belongs to the shepherd; then shalt thou experience, in truth, both how much greater and more affectionate regard he has for protecting it, and also, with what anxiety, diligence, and purpose of heart, he is concerned about it, that he might find it and bring it back. Wherefore, he would hereby set forth his free, wonderful, and inexhaustible love, and the unspeakable burnings of his ardent affection towards miserable, sinful, fearful, and trembling consciences; which are, his true lost sheep!

For the man who has lost this shepherd, and cannot hear his voice, is in exactly the same condition as the lost sheep: for he wanders away more and more from him, and gets farther and farther off. And although he may be called by strange doctrines to run over to them, among which he may expect to find his shepherd, yet he is deceived in his expectations and finds him not, but continues to run about into every corner, wandering up and down, and only finding himself farther and farther off. Nor does he ever find any help or consolation until he hear again the voice of his shepherd sounding in his ears. The truth of this we all learn by daily experience, and each one finds it exemplified in his own heart. For if the Gospel concerning Christ be removed from us, or be not in exercise, then some false teacher, or the head

of some sect, or perhaps some fanatic, introduces himself: one perverts the sacrament, another baptism: one teaches this, and another that, concerning a singular sanctity of life: each of whom, entices the poor miserable wandering sheep over to himself, and would make himself appear to be the true shepherd. But by all the endeavours of such as these, the sheep is only distracted with more complicated errors, until it be driven quite out of the way. With these joins in also the devil, with his cogitations, which he injects into the heart. Ah me! if thou hadst but done so and so, or hadst not done so and so, &c.—By all which, nothing else is effected, but the driving the sheep into a deeper perplexity of error, until it knows not where to stand.—And thus it ever is. When Christ is removed out of sight, and the doctrine concerning him extinguished, whatever else be taught or set forth, whatever other admonition be given, and in whatever way, all things only become the worse, and approach the nearer unto destruction, unless the true shepherd come with his voice, and call and bring back the wandering sheep.

Wherefore it is of the very utmost importance that we learn to know Christ aright; and that we consider him not to be a cruel tyrant or an angry judge who has drawn his sword against us; (as certain preachers have hitherto set him forth to the people, and as the devil himself has ever proposed him to be viewed and considered by the human heart:) but look upon him just as a sheep naturally looks upon its shepherd; not as one by whom it is to be frightened, driven about, and killed; but one, whom as soon as it sees, it is happy, hopes for all help, and no longer remains fearful and solitary, but immediately hastens and runs up to him with all confidence.

Therefore, if we desire to make a blessed beginning of our confidence, and to confirm ourselves, and be raised up with consolation, then, we must learn and rightly know the voice of our shepherd, that is, of Christ; and disregard the voices of all other shepherds, which will only draw us into errors, and drive us this

way and that. We must hear and apprehend in our minds, that article only which Christ paints out to our heart so sweetly and consolingly, and in such a way as never could be painted out by any reason ; so that our heart may say with all confidence, ‘ Jesus Christ my Lord is the only shepherd, and I alas am a poor lost sheep, that has wandered away in the wilderness. Nevertheless, I am distressed with much anxiety of mind on account of my evil life, and I desire with all the longings of my heart to be good, and to have a merciful God, and peace in my conscience ! And I am here told, that he has a no less longing after me than I have after him ! I am labouring with deep anxiety to get to him, and he is anxious and desires nothing else than to bring me back to himself !’

IF WE could but paint to ourselves his will in this way, and engrave it upon our heart,—that he has such a desire after us, and so sweetly spends himself upon us, it could not be that we should dread or fear him, but must run to him with a gladdened spirit, remain close to him only, and could not endure to hear the doctrine or voice of any other. For the intrusion of any other doctrine, whether of Moses or of any other, has no other effect, but to drive, agitate, and distress the conscience, that it can enjoy no peace or tranquillity. Therefore, Christ saith Matt. xi. “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,” &c. As though he had said, run about and seek wheresoever ye will, hear and learn all that is preached unto you, yet, ye shall find no rest of heart, no peace, but in me only !—We will easily permit good works to be preached, a righteous life to be taught, the Ten Commandments to be set forth, and all other things which serve for the amendment of life, but only as they are set forth to the unhumiliated and carnal multitude, and in order to bind and bridle the lasciviousness of our old Adam. But, when preaching to the conscience bound in straits and under tremblings on account of its sins, no other word must be preached but that concerning

Christ. For this conscience is that poor, miserable, lost sheep, who can bear and hear of no other master, but the one only shepherd Christ; who neither urges the law, nor does any thing severely, but deals most sweetly and tenderly, laying the miserable sinning lost sheep upon his shoulders, and doing that of his own spontaneous accord, which the sheep ought to have done. As we shall see more fully hereafter.

But in this place, each doctrine, (as we have abundantly observed before,) or, the voices of Moses and of Christ, must be rightly distinguished. For the lost sheep has no business to come near Moses, and therefore, is not to be admitted where he is, though his preaching be never so excellent. For if, confounding these things, we attempt to raise up the troubled conscience in this manner, ‘Be of good cheer; thou hast not committed murder; thou hast not polluted thyself with adultery, nor designed with deliberation any other outrage. This is indeed a certain consolation, but it will endure but a very little time, nor can it sustain the hostile attacks and power of the devil, nor does it produce or bring in any thing else but a self-confidence, which will render the miserable sheep no service; for it remains, just as it was before, astray and lost; nor can it at all help itself, nor come to its shepherd. But if it be to be raised up by consolation, then we must set before it its true shepherd, who is coming to seek it, to bring it back, and to speak that it may hear his voice. From this there will flow to it a true and effectual consolation, and it will be enabled to answer Moses boldly, and say, ‘Now I have nothing either for thy comforts or thy terrors; and, if thou wilt, exaggerate my sins as much as thou canst; make me a murderer and a parricide, or the very worst of all men; for now, I will neither follow thee, nor hear thy terrors with a fearful mind. This is the sheet anchor (as they say) of my consolation and salvation on which I with all confidence lean;—that I have such a shepherd, who comes to seek me of his own will, and lays me upon his shoulders, and carries me. Concerning this shepherd, if thou wilt, we will dispute;

not how righteous or how unrighteous I am, but how I may come to Christ !

WHEREFORE all preaching must ever be adapted to the state and capacity of the hearers. For I have said, that this doctrine is not fitted for a carnal and hardened man, even as it is not fit that a laborious thresher should be fed on delicacies, (which are to be given only to comfort and restore sick persons,) but on black bread and cheese, the proper food for labouring men. Give the delicate meats, which are easy of digestion, to sick persons or children who can digest nothing that is hard.

So also, in this matter, the same difference is to be made, that thou mayest rightly administer these things, and give to each his portion as a prudent householder. For Moses and the doctrine of the law are still to be observed by thee, because, thou mayest fall in with proud, hardened, and intractable men, who live in security and without fear ; and before these, thou art to set this strong and common food of labouring men ; that is, thou art to set forth Moses for them to hear, who thunders and lightens from Mount Sinai, who destroys the people of Israel, who leads them into the wilderness, and who drowns king Pharaoh in the Red Sea. But, whenever thou meet with troubled hearts, and weak and afflicted consciences, which have now become lost sheep ; to them, say nothing whatever about Moses and all the works of God in his law, but begin to speak only about the works wrought by Christ in the kingdom of grace ; and prove to, and diligently impress upon, the miserable conscience, how he shows himself towards the poor lost sheep ; namely, that he is a kind and good shepherd, who is greatly concerned for the lost sheep ; that he leaves all the rest, in his desire to find this one, and to bring it back into the right way ; and that he never ceases to search for it until he has brought it home. For it is the deepest grief to him, that any man should remain under sin, and thus tremble and fear ; nor can he endure, that any one should remain therein and perish. And therefore, he allures and calls thee most

lovingly by his sweet Gospel to come to him, lay thyself upon his shoulders, and suffer him to carry thee and to call thee his dear sheep.

But, the rest of the multitude of those who live in security and negligence, and care not at all whether God be wrath or whether he be pleased, are not to be called the lost sheep, but rather the wild goat, which will neither suffer itself to be fed or tamed. But he whose sins are a burthen to him, and who is struggling under the conflict of faith; where the peril is not, whether he shall lose Moses, but whether he shall lose Christ himself the principal object; that is, where the conscience is in fear and straits, whether God be favourable and will shew mercy; this is the man, who, in truth, with sighs and groans seeks and cries after his shepherd, and entreats that he would stretch forth his hands to help, as David did, Psalm cxix. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant," &c. To the taste of such as these, this sugar and these sweet morsels are savoury, whereby their heart is revived and prevented from falling into desperation; by such consolations as these it is refreshed and raised up, not through Moses, but through Christ; not because it is reconciled to Moses, or made able to appease him, but because it has found God reconciled in Christ, wheresoever Moses may come in with his consolations. Although, at the same time, it is an ornament to us, even as it also becomes us, not to give ourselves, contrary to the law, to theft, to robbery, to commit murder, or in any other way to injure or hurt our neighbour. This, however, is not a right consolation of the heart, but only a momentary tickling of the outward skin, as it were, which doth not abide or enter into the soul: because, if the devil come and attack the heart, all this consolation is utterly taken away: and although at any time thou mayest do what is right and good, yet he will bring forth tenfold more instances in which thou hast done evil: nay, he will even in the purest works find out much impurity, and turn the whole into sins.

Wherefore, we must not by any means rest upon

such a consolation as this, but must rather reject it, and say, 'Whether I be good, or whether I be evil, I do not in the present case dispute; but I leave that till we come to that place where we teach and talk about works; but the ground on which I now stand, is not the place for talking about my works, and the goodness of my life, but concerning Christ and his works, which he has wrought for me his poor lost sheep. Wherefore, if thou ask whether or not I be a good and righteous man, I answer plainly, No! and therefore on this ground where I now stand, I will not be righteous. But if thou ask whether Christ be good and righteous, that I can, without doubting, and with all confidence, affirm; and I place this in the stead of my own goodness and righteousness; and to him alone, with all boldness, I appeal; seeing that, I am baptized in his name, the letter and seal of which, I have contained in his Gospel; — that I am his poor lost sheep, and that he is the good shepherd who seeketh the sheep that is lost, deals with me without any laws, and requires nothing of me; and does not, like Moses, drive, force, and compel me, but holds out to me pure and most sweet grace; for he puts himself under me, takes me upon his shoulders, and carries me. Why then should I fear the thunderings and lightnings of Moses and the devil, when I lie down under his protection, who has given me his righteousness and all other benefits, as a free gift, and who holds me safe and carries me? For now, there is no farther danger that I shall perish, while I remain a poor lost sheep, and do not refuse my shepherd, but fear to depart rashly from him!

HERE then you have a representation set before you, in the most lovely manner that it could possibly be described. And now the only thing that is wanting, is faith: this is indispensably necessary. For the description is beautiful and most full of sweet consolation, and is truth itself; but the deficiency is, that it is not at once felt and enjoyed when it ought to be. For while the sheep is wandering; that is, while the man feels that he is burthened with his sins, and knows not where to abide, and is thrown by the devil into a confusion of

mind, in this state, he always runs in a contrary direction, and cannot receive into his mind or hold fast that these things are true, for all that he has here heard, falls away from his mind by reason of his present feelings and experience. For the devil has blinded his eyes, so that he can conceive of nothing else but the wrath and indignation of God. Whereby, his heart is so weighed down, that he cannot raise himself up in mind to turn his eyes another way. Nay, he lies so deeply drowned in this state of thought, that he can perceive in Christ nothing but an angry judge; in the same way as he has been hitherto ever painted forth and impressed upon all men's hearts by the ungodly Papists—as sitting upon a bow in the clouds with a sword proceeding out of his mouth.

For one of the most insidious and impious devices of the devil that he practises upon the miserable sheep, is, to pervert these sweet representations of Christ, and to blind its eyes, that it might not know its shepherd, and that he might thus lead the man to Moses under the pretence of leading him to Christ; and might then dispute concerning Christ, as he did before concerning Moses. Therefore, there is need of strong faith, when the man has to fight against himself, and to believe that these things are true. For his own feelings of sin are strong enough of themselves, and to these, in addition, comes the devil, and exaggerates sin and terror in a wonderful manner: under the greatness and straits of which, even the very marrow in the bones, and the heart in the body, may melt away. Therefore, this faith is not so easily attained unto as some may imagine. When all things are quiet, it is an easy matter to believe that Christ is sweet and amiable; but when anxiety and terror break in and overwhelm the mind, then the man is blind and heartless, and will only believe according to what he feels and experiences in his heart; which feeling he follows, and thus confirms himself in his error; for he is overtaken by it, and cannot think otherwise, than that things are really as he feels them, although it is no such thing.

WHEREFORE, this is a skill, by which the man may say to his heart,—‘ If thou confess that thou art a lost sheep, in that thou sayest rightly. But, seeing thou wouldst run away from Christ, and wouldst conceive of him in thy mind that he is a man who would drive thee away and terrify thee, that is a suggestion and temptation of the devil. For if thou didst rightly behold and confess him, as thy true shepherd, thou would not be afraid at the sight of him, nor wouldst thou conceive terror in thy mind, but wouldst run up to him with all gladness and confidence. For he does not come unto thee to condemn thee, but he comes to seek thee; that he may lay thee upon his shoulders and carry thee, and deliver and rescue thee from thy sins, from all errors, from the devil and his power, and from every peril. Dost thou feel therefore that thou art a sinner, and deservest indignation? Then thou oughtest to call upon that shepherd the more diligently, that he would deliver thee from it; nor shouldst thou conceive of him in thy mind otherwise than a sheep conceives of its shepherd; whom it cannot fear, but is rendered glad and happy as soon as it sees or hears him; although it might have run from him, and might have, on that account, a most just cause of fear. But it knows full well, that the shepherd cannot be angry with the straying sheep, and therefore it promises to itself nothing but the greatest love and good-will.’—Therefore, the force of the whole lies in this alone, that thou rightly learn Christ, and view him according to the word of God, and not according to the thoughts and feelings of thine own mind: for the thoughts of man are vain and lies, but the words of God are true and cannot deceive. Moreover, he has confirmed the same by lively operations and by examples, and continues to confirm it daily throughout the whole of Christendom. Wherefore, the word only is to be engrafted in our hearts, and we must cleave to it with a steady mind, that we may prove our own hearts to be liars, and set this article of truth against them. For that alone will stand as truth, and all that is contrary to it will be found vanity and lies.

But this is a skill of which I am myself yet ignorant, much more so must those other vain spirits be who boast a great deal concerning it, making themselves appear to know all things about it the moment they hear any mention of it; whereas, they never had any real taste or experience of it whatever. It is an easy matter to speak of this skill, but none know how difficult it is to attain unto it in reality, but those who are seriously brought to experience that difficulty.

This is then the first description of our lovely Christ, which is set forth by himself in this Gospel: wherein, he abundantly reveals the great love and the desires of his most anxious heart towards us, shewing that he feels the utmost anxiety and concern for the recovery of the one sheep; which one, leaving the ninety and nine, he seeks out and finds, not with the intent of terrifying or beating it, but that he might bring it help, might find it and bring it back, and might comfort the miserable and trembling conscience with his kind and sweet voice and communion. From all which things you may see, how great a pleasure you give him by staying on him and cleaving to him with your whole heart, and promising to yourself from him every kind of goodness and love.

THE SECOND thing which you clearly see, is, how he shews forth his joy and unspeakable goodness by external signs and gestures of every kind; and how, after the sheep is found, he discovers unto it his friendship. He does not deal with it according to any law, as, in his own right he might do; he does not drive it before him as he does the rest, nor suffer it to go alone. He does none of these things, but he lays it upon his shoulders and carries it the whole way through the desert: thus, taking all the toil and labour upon himself, that he may cause the sheep to be at rest: nor does he do it against his will, but gladly, for he is filled with joy at having found the sheep. And only observe, how well it is with the sheep: in what safety and peace it lies upon the shoulders of its shepherd: with what satisfaction it sees itself rest so sweetly, in being wholly delivered from the

difficulty of the way, and free from all fear of dogs or wolves : that is, of all errors and lies, together with all perils and destructions.

This representation indeed deserves to be called truly sweet and lovely, and consolatory to look upon. And our Lord Jesus Christ does just the same when he delivers us ; which he did once, corporally, by his passion and death ; and he now continues to do the same in power, spiritually, by the preaching of his word. Whereby he so lays us upon his shoulders, and carries and defends us, that we may live in perfect freedom from all perils of sin and the devil ; which, although they may strike terror into us, and shew themselves as if they would devour us, yet can do nothing to injure us ; for, our being carried is our salvation ; and the same, driving away all fear, sets us free from every danger. Even so the sheep, while he lies upon the shoulders of the shepherd, cares not at all though the dogs bark never so much, or the wolf lurk about in wait. Nay rather, it lays down its head in safety, and sleeps quietly from its very heart. So also we, while we remain immovable and stand fast in this article of faith, ‘ I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord who was crucified for us, and who died and rose again,’ &c. find no reason whatever to fear that we shall perish or be devoured by the devil, though he open his jaws never so wide. For we are not then walking on our own way, nor do we walk on our own feet, but we hang on the neck of our shepherd and lie on his shoulders, where we are entirely safe. And though sin, death, and hell, be never so terrible, they dare not rush upon him. But, were we without him, we should be miserable sheep indeed, and our die would be cast at once. For, even as the sheep cannot take care for itself, nor prevent itself by foresight from wandering out of the way, unless it be guided by the shepherd ; and when it has wandered out of the way and is lost, it cannot of itself return to the shepherd, but must be sought out and searched for by the shepherd until he have found it ; and then, must be laid thus upon his shoulders and carried home, lest it be frightened

and driven away from him by the way, or be caught and devoured by a wolf;—in like manner we also, can neither help ourselves by strength or by wisdom in order to give ourselves peace and tranquillity of conscience, or to effect our escape from the hands of the devil, death, and hell, unless Christ himself speak to us his word afresh, and call us thereby unto himself again. And although we then come unto him, and stand in faith, yet, it is not in our own power to keep ourselves therein, nor can we stand by our own strength, nor in any other way but by his continually holding us, raising us up, and carrying us by the power of his word: for the devil is ever devising and laying snares and destruction for us; and “as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour,” as the apostle Peter testifies; wherefore, there is no room here for our glorying in the freedom of the will, or boasting of our own strength, for they have no influence at all, either in our beginning or our proceeding, much less in our persevering.—It is Christ our shepherd alone that worketh the whole!

HENCE then we may be certain of this:—that, while we lie on the shoulders of Christ, we shall be in perfect safety, from all terror, and all peril; for he will not permit us to be plucked or torn away from off his neck, nor will he himself throw us off; seeing that, he so exults and rejoices, that he has found the sheep which was lost, and has brought it back again to the rest of the flock. And, in a word, there is here nothing of terror, of dismay, or of exaction, but only life and grace; which he communicates to his sheep most lovingly and tenderly.

On the contrary, Moses, not like a shepherd of poor miserable weak sheep, but like a herdsman of strong and great beasts, drives his cattle with a club and a rod by three-day journeys through the desert, until they are worn out with travelling. And it is by such a shepherd as this, that those hardened and proud ones are to be tamed and restrained. And even we also, as we shall be under Moses, (that is, according to the flesh and external life,) must do whatever the law requires. But, in that

we are Christians and are so called, we must not in any way permit, that any work should be laid upon us or required of us, but we are to give ourselves up to Christ to be carried by him, and to be lifted up on high, not upon horses and chariots, but upon his own shoulders only. Which, as I have said, is wrought by his ordaining the Word to be preached unto us;—that he died for us; that he took away our sins in his own body on the cross; that he has vanquished the devil, death, and sin, and has trampled them under his feet, and made and opened to us a way unto everlasting life, and carries us in it all the time that we live. Wherefore, we are not to look to our life, how righteous or how faithful we are, but are only to take care that we lie quietly upon his shoulders. While we stand in this state of things, we need not trouble ourselves about any sin, death, life, or anxiety, because we have all things abundantly in Christ, who carries us and holds us fast.

Nor is Christ satisfied with all these things, neither with having sought out the sheep so anxiously, nor with having found it and carried it back to the fold with such unspeakable joy; but, when he has brought it back, he appoints certain days in his house for feasting and gladly rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbours that they might rejoice with him. And to such a height does he carry this rejoicing, that he declares, that God himself in heaven, together with all the angelic hosts and all creatures, rejoices over one sinner that repenteth. In which words, he shews and sets forth; what kind of character it is that deserves to be called a “lost sheep,”—he that fervently desires to be delivered from his sins; that aims only at coming unto Christ; that alters for the better his external life, which is called, having a miserable and troubled, and so, a contrite and humble heart, and an afflicted conscience; which the devil attacks in every way, and so straitens, that the man well nigh perishes in those straits. And Christ is such a man, who never seeks any sheep but that which is lost and cannot help itself.

AND now see, in what way Christ could be set forth

with more tenderness, or in what words more efficaciously consoling! What do you imagine he could do more to gladden the mind of a sinner, or to strengthen his confidence in himself more firmly! For we here see the most loving shepherd, representing himself to us miserable sinners, as one that seeks his lost sheep with the most painful anxiety, bringing them back when he has found them with the greatest joy, and exulting in rejoicing so great, that even all the angels and saints, and all creatures rejoice over us with him, and smile upon us more sweetly, more cheerfully, and more brightly than the very sun in his splendor. For it is so, naturally, that when a man is sad, the sun and all things besides, wear a cheerless, dull, and cloudy aspect. On the other hand, when the heart of a man is glad, he has a tenfold alacrity, and all things appear to him clear and bright.

And now, he that firmly believes these things, certainly feels, through Christ, a true consolation and joy; for such an one has a sure persuasion, that he, by cleaving steadily unto Christ, and lying on his shoulders, is a welcome and acceptable guest in the kingdom of heaven, and is received with the utmost joy. But when we are in trouble and anxiety of conscience, we have a far different feeling and sensation; in which state, the heart can think of nothing else than that all the angels are close behind him with drawn swords. And while this fear obstructs the mind, there can be no lively joy conceived concerning either God or the angels: and some cannot look on any creature with a cheerful mind, but fear the sight of the sun, and are terrified at the moving of a leaf. All which arises from their terrifying and gnawing themselves with their own cogitations, from which they would willingly disentangle themselves; and they try every means to get to feel that goodness in themselves which might allow them to be free from all fear.—But if thou hast a desire to conceive in thine heart true consolation and joy, give all diligence to fix and impress well on thy heart this sweet representation of the most lovely shepherd, and to look for it where it is to be seen, even in CHRIST, and no where

else. In this Man thou wilt find all things, if thou but remain under his protection, and lie still upon his shoulders. But all the joy that can be obtained out of him, is not the true joy of the heart; even if thou call in to thy help all creatures, and enjoy all the pleasures and delights that the world can give!

Glory to God the greatest and the highest.

S E R M O N II.

CONCERNING THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X.

I am the good Shepherd, &c.

THIS Gospel contains great consolation; setting forth the Lord Christ in a kind of fertile description; — what his character is, what his works are, and how he is affected towards men; saying, “I am the good Shepherd.” And we cannot more clearly present this to the eyes of our understanding, than by setting forth in a comparison, the difference between light and darkness, day and night; that is, between a good and a bad shepherd; for this is what Christ does here.

You have already repeatedly heard, that God has ordained a twofold preaching to the world. The one, which sets forth the precepts of God — that we are not to have strange gods, not to murder or steal, not to commit adultery; and which threatens death to the transgressors in these things; and which moreover, does not purify any man’s heart from these things; for although a man may, by these precepts, be so restrained from these sins as to have an external show of civil righteousness, yet, in his heart, he fosters a hatred of the law, and would that there were no law at all. The other

office of preaching is, the Gospel; which shews you where that strength is to be obtained that shall enable you to do those things which the law prescribes: this preaching does not drive men by force, nor threaten them, but sweetly invites them. It does not say, 'Do this thing or that;' but it says, 'Come unto me; I will shew thee to whom thou must go, and whence thou art to obtain power to become righteous. Behold here is Christ, who will give thee this abundantly.'

Wherefore, these two things have this difference between them:—the one is taking, the other giving: the one is exacting, the other freely bestowing: and this difference is to be most carefully observed. In this way it is that God ever has governed, and still does govern, the world. To carnal and lust-gratifying men, who are not touched with the Gospel, the law is to be preached; which may act as a schoolmaster over them, and may restrain them until they be humbled and acknowledge their diseases. When this is done, then the Gospel must be set before them.

These are the two offices of preaching which were ordained from heaven of God. But beside these, there are others; which, indeed, were not sent down from heaven, but are the inventions of men; which the Pope and our bishops have introduced, in order to disturb consciences; who are unworthy the name of shepherds, or indeed of hirelings, but are those very persons whom Christ calls thieves, robbers, and wolves. But if we will rule men wholesomely, we must do it by the Word of God; for where the Word of God is neglected in this government of men, there a certain anarchy prevails.

Moreover, Christ here assumes another office, representing it most descriptively. He makes himself the principal, and thus, the only shepherd; for, that which he does not feed, is without pasture. Let us then look into this preaching, which is so excellent, and so abounding with consolations.

Ye have heard, then, that our Lord Christ, after his crucifixion and death, came forth alive and ascended up on high, and was translated into a state of total

freedom from the power of death: not that he sits in heaven at ease (as they say) with folded hands, vainly amusing himself, and, according to the old proverb, enjoying himself; but rather, he holds the reins of empire, and himself governs his kingdom, and acts as king, as many of the prophets have spoken of him, and as the whole scripture abundantly testifies. Wherefore, let us believe, that he is continually with us; and let us not so fix him on that throne above, as though he sits on it given up wholly to slothful ease; but let us be assured that he, from the seat above, observes and governs all things; as Paul saith, Ephes. iv. that he above all things has his eye fixed on his own kingdom; which is, the Christian Faith.

Wherefore, the kingdom of Christ must go on here among us upon earth. Concerning this kingdom, we have said that it is so ordained, that we may all increase more and more, and become more and more pure every day. Moreover, that it is not administered by force, but by the preaching of the mouth; that is, by the Gospel. This preaching did not proceed from men, but was ordained and performed by Christ himself, and afterwards inspired into the hearts of his apostles and their successors, that they might, by mouth, preach it to others.—This then is the kingdom of Christ; it is thus that he reigns; so that, all the power and efficacy of his administration are placed in the Word of God. And those who hear and believe this Word belong to this kingdom: which Word, is rendered so powerful, that it effects all things that are necessary for man, and carries with it a certain full treasury of all good things: “for it is the power of God unto every one that believeth,” as Paul saith, Rom. i. and is able to save all men. Wherefore, if thou believe that Christ died and rose again to deliver thee from all destruction, and if thou cleave to that Word, it is so sure and certain, that no creature can overthrow it. And as no creature can subvert the Word, so thou canst not in any way be deceived when thou retest upon it as upon a certain foundation. And being thus fortified by the Word, thou wilt

conquer sin, death, evil spirits, and hell : and thus, thou wilt come and be drawn into that state where the word itself is ; that is, into eternal peace, joy, and life : and, to be brief, thou wilt be made partaker of all the blessings that are contained in the word !

This kingdom, therefore, is wonderful. The word itself is present, and is thundered forth by a living voice before all : but its power is quite hidden : nor can any one have a proof of its energy, nor know that it is so powerful, but he who believes it. Moreover, you must feel and taste it in your own heart. We ministers can do nothing else than become the mouths and instruments of our Lord Christ, through which he sensibly preaches his word. He permits the word to be proclaimed openly, that all may hear it. But for the heart itself to digest it and feel it within, that is the operation of faith, and is the mystical work of Christ ; which he works, according to his divine predestination, where and when he will.

And this is the sum of what he saith, “ I am the good Shepherd. For who is a good shepherd ? A good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep ; I also lay down my life for my sheep.” In this description of his power he comprehends all things at once, and sets before us a sweet comparison drawn from sheep. You see that the nature of this animal is altogether so fool-like and simple, that it has even furnished a proverb which is usually applied to persons that have stupid and senseless heads—‘ He is a sheep !’ Or, ‘ He has a sheep’s head !’ That is, he has the ways of a sheep. Though its nature is also this : — that it hears the voice of its shepherd sooner than any other animal whatever : nor will it follow any other than the shepherd of its own flock. And it is so devoted, that it will cleave to none other but its shepherd ; to whom alone, when it is in trouble, it flees. It cannot help itself, nor of itself feed and be taken care of ; but depends absolutely upon the care of another in every respect. The nature of this animal, Christ uses as a comparison ; and, by a parable, makes himself the shepherd ; wherein he beautifully

sets forth, of what nature his kingdom is, and in what it consists. As though he had said, My kingdom is nothing else than my presiding over sheep; that is, miserable and troubled men in this world; who can know and find, out of me, no succour, no counsel to help themselves!

MOREOVER, to set this forth more clearly, and that it might be the better understood, let us adduce out of the prophet Ezekiel, ch. xxxiv., those words in which he thunders against evil shepherds who are opposed to Christ: saying, "Wo unto the shepherds that feed themselves! should not shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat and ye clothe you with the wool: ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought again that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill," &c.—God here rebukes the shepherds for being negligent in feeding the cattle. Only weigh the contents of the words. In this place, that which he the most seriously and with the greatest concern sets forth, is, that the weak, the sick, the broken, the driven away, the lost, should be strengthened, healed, sought out, and brought back to the fold. This (says he) is what ye shepherds ought to have done, but ye did it not. Wherefore, I will take upon me the office of a good shepherd; as he saith a little after, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away; and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."

Here you see, that the nature of the kingdom of Christ, is to be occupied in the care of the weak, the sick, and the broken; and that Christ is set before them for that very end, that he may administer to them

the healing hand. This preaching is indeed full of great consolation. But our deficiency is here,—we have not a sufficient feeling sense of our calamitous state; for if we felt that, we should flee to this true and very Hercules. He is the deliverer from all evil.—But what did those shepherds? They ruled with the rigour of Manlius: they enforced the law of God with imposing tyranny: to which they added moreover their own inventions, as the same shepherds also do in our day: against which inventions if you transgress, they immediately cry out and condemn you without law or mercy: so that, their administration is nothing else than a continual driving and commanding. But Christ, who is wholly unlike all these, declares that such is not rightly feeding and ruling souls. For in this way, no one is holpen, but rather is robbed of the hope he may have, and is destroyed, as we shall presently hear. Let us therefore, now go over the description of the prophet in all its particulars.

FIRST, he says, that the weak sheep are to be comforted. That is, consciences which have but a weak faith, and are of a sorrowful spirit, and are yet very sore, are not to be tyrannically dealt with, and rebuked thus;—‘Thou must do this. Thou must be strong; for if thou be weak, thou wilt be numbered among the damned.’ This is not to administer courage and strength to the weak. Paul, Rom. xiv. teaches that we are to receive such as are weak in the faith. Wherefore, they are not to be driven with hatred or iniquity, but are rather to be holpen up by administered consolations; lest, being weak, they should despair; whereas, in time, they will attain unto proper strength. For the prophet Isaiah speaks thus sweetly concerning Christ, chap. xlii., “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.” “The bruised reed,” signifies weak and afflicted consciences; which are easily shaken and driven to desperation. These God does not at once trample under his feet; this is not the nature of the divine being; he rather gently and carefully deals with them that they fall not. “Smoking flax” which has, as

yet, hardly a spark of fire, and is rather smoke than kindling fire, signifies those same weak ones; whose spirit shall not utterly fail, for he will not entirely extinguish them; nay, he will by degrees fan them to a flame, and will strengthen them more and more. What consolation think ye may they draw from hence, who understand these things! He, therefore, who does not lead with a kind, and as it were indulging hand, those consciences that are yet weak, is not to be reckoned among the number of profitable shepherds.

SECONDLY, saith the prophet, "that which was sick ye ought to have healed." Who then are these "sick?" Truly, those who labour externally in the entanglements of various works. It signifies weak consciences, principally. And next, it refers to the external walk in life. That is, when any one, in fits of self-will and wrath, is driven headlong this way or that, in a passion; or commits at times other foolish sins of the same kind; even as the apostles also themselves offended in these gross things. Those, therefore, who thus offend in these external things, and break through the bounds of what is right, before men; so that they, being offended, may say of such, that they are men of bad and morose spirits;—these, God does not at once scratch off from his books, (as they say); for his kingdom is not ordained to receive none but men that are sound and of perfect health, because these pertain to the life to come. But Christ now sits on the throne of state above, to exercise a care over these helpless ones, and to send them succour from thence under all their calamities.

Wherefore, let us not at once conclude, when we sensibly feel our weakness and frailty, that all hope of our salvation is gone, and that we are banished from the kingdom of Christ. Nay rather, on the contrary, the more consciousness we have of our weakness, the more determinately let us go unto Christ. For it is for this very end that he sits in state,—that he might, when we ask him, administer unto us some remedy for, and alleviation of, our sorrows. If therefore thou be sick, and feel thyself to be a sinner and full of misery, thou hast

the greater need to go unto him and say, ‘ O Lord, I therefore come unto thee because I am a sinner ; that thou mightest take from me the burthen of my sins, and make me righteous.’ Thus thy very necessity should be a spur in thy side : for the greater and more raging thy disease is, the more shouldst thou run to the aid of some physician ; this I would especially impress upon thy mind. And Christ therefore invites us, that when our strength is all gone, we should go to him. But these false shepherds persuade themselves, that men may be made righteous by loud bawling and compulsive driving : whereas, by such means, they only become worse. Hence it is, that we see in this day, that this preposterous way of instructing men, only tends most miserably to confound all things ; as the prophet here complains.

THIRDLY, “ that which was torn have ye not bound up.” To be “ torn,” is when a man’s mouth or rib is broken, or any other hurt received : that is, when the Christian is not only weak, and slips out of the way through the infirmity of nature, or makes a slip of the tongue, (from which sins no one is in all respects free,) but when he falls into heavy temptations so as to break a leg, and afterwards, to fall down and depart from the Gospel through a denial of it ; as Peter did when he denied Christ. Now if any one fall thus enormously, so as even to be driven quite back, or to fall prostrate on the ground, yet his name is not to be scratched off from the book of Christians, as though he had utterly fallen out of Christ’s kingdom. Christ must and will be ever like himself : and his kingdom must and will consist in no other thing, than the same overflowing abundance of mere grace and mercy : so that his work will ever continue to be a helping those, who acknowledge their misery in departing from him, and who desire to be rescued from that misery : and thus, his kingdom will never be any thing but an administering of help and comfort. And as a shepherd, he will ever with an admirable kindness and amiableness be putting himself in the way and in the sight of all, and inviting and alluring

them to himself; desiring to shew himself every thing but a God inaccessible.

Moreover, all these things are administered by the Gospel only. This is the only support for the weak, the only medicine for the sick. For the word is of that nature, that it is a certain heal-all for every disease of the mind, a medicine for every patient, and a kind of solace that drives away every care and trouble from the heart; so that no one, though overwhelmed with the guilt of sins never so great and peculiar, need despair. Christ alone therefore is the true and real shepherd; the true helper under every distress; who averts every evil, and lifts up every one that is fallen. No one that is not thus affected toward his sheep, deserves the name of shepherd.

FOURTHLY: saith the prophet, "That which was driven away ye brought not back." What is that which is "driven away?" Truly, the soul that is despised and brought to shame; which is thought by most to be utterly lost. But persons of this kind, Christ will have treated tenderly. For he does not so contract his kingdom as to admit none but the strong, the whole, and the altogether perfect, to dwell therein:—that perfection pertains to the future kingdom after death. But this present kingdom of his, wherein he presides until the day of the resurrection over those who are yet subject to mortality, breathes nothing but grace and sweetness, even as God declared to the future race of Israel, that the promised land should flow with milk and honey: which also St. Paul confirms when he says, 1 Cor. xii. "Those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant comeliness."

FIFTHLY: the prophet saith in conclusion, "That which was lost ye have not sought out." "That which is lost," signifies that which is thought to be so condemned, as to be beyond all possibility of being recalled to amendment. Such as are the publicans and harlots in the Gospel: and such, among us, who appear to be altogether untameable, and who refuse the bridles of all

discipline. These are in no wise to be disregarded, but to be called back into the way by all possible means. Even as we read Paul did, when he delivered over two unto Satan, 1 Tim. i. "Whom (says he) I have delivered unto Satan, that they might be chastened, and might learn hereafter not to blaspheme." And also, 1 Cor. v. "I have resolved to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved," &c. These he cast out as condemned, but afterwards, he restored them.

Wherefore Christ must be preached, as rejecting no one whatever, how weak soever he may be, but as being ready to receive unto himself all of every sort, and to comfort, support, and help them; and that he is ever to be viewed by the eyes of our mind, under the character of a good shepherd. Such a representation as this, hearts will gladly follow. So that, men are no more to be urged and driven by iniquitous compulsion. For the Gospel carries in itself that power of attraction, that it invites and causes minds to follow spontaneously; and works in men a willingness to come, together with a confidence in coming. Under this they conceive a love and affection for Christ; so that now, they perform all the duties of a Christian with a willing mind; whereas before, they needed to be driven with spurs and bawling reproofs. Those things however which we do from being driven by bawling words, we do against our will, and with a reluctant mind; and such an obedience as this, God cannot endure. But when I see that the Lord has a mind so favourably inclined towards me and so willing to serve me, my heart is so softened that I cannot contain myself, but immediately leave all other things and run up to him; and, from this time, my heart is filled with all pleasure and joy.

Here then observe what an accursed thing it is for one to judge another. The kingdom of Christ, as we have heard, is for that end established, that it might have respect unto sick souls, and might render them righteous. Wherefore, all those must be in error, who look only at the strong and the holy. And hence, the

chief of all knowledge, is to know Christ aright. For it is engendered in us by nature to be ourselves filled with sins within, and yet to wish all men to be holy; and with great eagerness to look upon strong Christians only, turning away all the while our eyes from the weak, and persuading ourselves, that those who are thus weak are not to be reckoned among the company of Christians; and therefore, those whom we behold to be deficient in the smallest matters of sanctity, we will not hold to be saints, while we at the same time wink at our own sins, when we are all the while far worse than others. This arises from our nature, which is so filled with deadly poisons; and from the forwardness of our reason, which is ever measuring the kingdom of God according to its own apprehension; and imagining, that those things which appear vile in its own eyes, are vile in the eyes of God. Wherefore, all these things must be far removed from thine eyes. For after thou hast imagined in this way, as long and as much as thou canst, thou only plungest thyself after all into such thoughts as these.—‘I am undone! Which way shall I turn! If Christianity be this, that it receiveth none but the strong, the perfect, and the righteous, when shall I ever attain unto that state!’—And in this way thou wilt bring thyself into that perplexity that thou never wilt be able to arrive at a state of Christianity.

Wherefore, thou must come at last to this point, to say—‘O Lord, I feel that I am of such and such infirmity; and am as one sick and broken in mind: yet this shall be so far from being a hinderance to me, that I will on that very account, come unto thee to implore thy aid: seeing that thou art a shepherd, and that good shepherd, and I doubt not in the least that thou art such an one: therefore, I will not despond in my mind, how destitute soever I may be of good works.’—Hence this is the place for exerting a determination of mind, that we may learn to know Christ rightly in this way:—that his kingdom is the receptacle of the weak and the sick only: so that it is in nature and appearance a kind of hospital or infirmary, wherein there are none but diseased

persons, who are lying down, and have need of being attended on until they be healed. But this knowledge very few receive: this is a wisdom not known to the city: so that, oftentimes, those are very deficient in it, who are partakers of the Gospel and of the Spirit. For this is the highest wisdom, unto an higher than which none can attain. Wherefore, although men look into the scriptures and see that they extol the kingdom of Christ in a wonderful manner, yet they do not seriously consider with themselves, what meaning is really couched in those words; nor do they observe that very deep wisdom, which is wisdom itself, that lies hidden under them, nor how widely that differs from all human wisdom. For we do not use our wisdom before the wise and prudent and the disputers of this world, and thus prostitute it unto them; but we use it before fools and the base things of the world; not, however, that we may gratify ourselves thereby, but rather that we may pluck men out of the world, in order that they may emerge from their sins and wretchedness, and attain unto righteousness and a sound understanding.

Hence it is evident, that Christian wisdom consists in this;—that we raise not up our eyes on high, nor aim at that only which is exalted and wise, and thus have lofty notions of ourselves; but rather, that we turn our eyes to contemplate what is lowly, and observe that which is humble and foolish. He that has attained unto this wisdom, let him give thanks unto God. For by this knowledge he is become such an one, that he can rightly accommodate himself unto every thing that happens in the world. Wherefore, you will find many, yea very many, who are preachers of the Gospel, that have not yet attained unto this wisdom. For hitherto, we have been so instructed and so trained up, as to believe, that none can apply his mind to come unto Christ, unless he be first perfectly pure. Wherefore, thou must unlearn this persuasion, and imbibe that true understanding of knowing Christ rightly;—that he is the true and good shepherd, of whom we have heard already.

And now, by way of antithesis, he compares him-

self, the good shepherd, with a bad shepherd, or an hireling, and shews that he is the true and good shepherd. And even as the name Christ is proper to him only, and yet he is not displeased at our having the same appellation also, and being named after Christ; so, although he be the only shepherd, yet he allows ministers to apply the same appellation to themselves. So also, Matt. xxiii. he forbids us to call any one upon earth by the name father, because one only is our father, even he who is in heaven. And yet, nevertheless, Paul calls himself the father of the Corinthians, when he says, 1 Cor. iv. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you," &c. Thus also God declares that he alone will be called father, and yet he permits men to be called by that name, and that they also should be fathers; which, however, they have not from themselves, but from Christ. So also we are called Christians; but on this account only;—because we have nothing of ourselves, but receive all as freely given unto us for Christ's sake.

"But the hireling (saith he) who is not the shepherd, and whose own the sheep are not, when he seeth the wolf coming, leaveth the sheep and fleeth, because he is an hireling." This is indeed a fearful saying, that some even appear to preach and inculcate the Gospel purely, and to comfort and heal the sheep; and yet, at last, suffer them to be taken away and torn; then only looking to their own safety by flight, when there was the most need of present help. As long as no wolves appear, they discharge their duty sedulously and well; but as soon as they see the wolves rushing in upon the sheep, they leave them at once. And if they have fed those sheep well, so that they have become fat, strong, and sound, they are then only the more delicious morsels to satisfy the belly of the wolf.

But what is the meaning of this part of the parable? The meaning of Christ is this.—In my kingdom, (which consists in nothing else, but in establishing the weak, in healing the sick, and in giving courage to the fearful,) the holy cross shall by no means be wanting. For when it shall be preached that Christ only is needful unto us,

whose poor miserable sheep we are ; that he only is our strength, our salvation, our defence, and our refuge ; that our own powers and our own works are of no avail whatever ; and that we are to put no trust in them ; (whereby all our own works, and all the inventions and contrivances which the world vamps up for worshipping and gaining the favour of God, vanish like a cloud of dust before the wind ;) such preaching as this, the world cannot bear,—that it should be the nature of the Gospel to bring with it the cross as an inseparable companion. And therefore, whosoever shall honestly confess this from his heart before the whole world, such an one must of necessity expose his life to the sword.

If therefore these things are so, we have here a separation of the good shepherds from the bad, in the most open manner. He that is an hireling, only preaches the Gospel so long as he hears himself called a learned, good, and holy man. But afterwards, when he comes to be reviled and branded with the opprobrious appellation of an evil villain and a heretic, or is made the subject of public ridicule, he then either recants or falls utterly prostrate, and leaves the miserable and pitiable sheep alone and without a shepherd ; and now, they are in a worse state than they were before. And what avails it that the sheep were well fed ; this is of no service to them now. Whereas, had they been true shepherds, they would rather have lost their lives than have left the sheep in the jaws of the wolf ; being ready at any time to lay down their lives for the Gospel's sake. And hence, they are any thing but true German shepherds, the tendency of whose preaching is only the increase of their gain in this life. These are, without controversy, hirelings. They seek their own gain, under cover of the Word of God ; and only maintain and hold fast their principles, so long as this province will bring them honour and renown. But when the wolf begins to make his appearance, they draw back their feet, basely deny the Gospel, or betake themselves to flight, and leave the flock of sheep destitute. They look about them for their pasture and for their shepherd, who should

defend them from the rapacious wolves, but the excellent shepherd no where makes his appearance; at the very juncture of time, when he ought to have stood forward as a defence, and to have administered strength to the sheep, he was gone!

This continually happens in our day. When these matters often come to that pass, that even violent hands are laid upon us by the rage of persecution, then preachers shut their mouths; and when the firmest stand ought to be made, then they betake themselves the most to flight; while the sheep are scattered in a miserable manner, and are carried and driven away in every direction. May God grant that some of them at least may defend the Gospel of Christ with a firmness of mind, and may be ready to shed their blood, if circumstances shall require it, in defence of the sheep.— Thus has Christ portrayed hirelings!

He saith moreover, “I am the good Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and are known of mine.” These words have an extensive signification; and it would take up a great deal of time if we were to dwell upon them particularly. He is here speaking of that office which belongs peculiarly to him. There is, says he, a mutual knowledge between me and my sheep. How comes this to pass? He shews how it is immediately afterwards. “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father.” And how knoweth he the Father? Not by human, but by a divine knowledge.

I have sometimes spoken upon this more largely upon former occasions. The sum of the matter is this—Christ knows us as his sheep, and we on the other hand embrace him as our shepherd. We have already heard who the good shepherd is, and on the other hand, who the poor weak sheep are. He looks upon us as sheep which are ready to faint, are sick, and have broken limbs: that is, he is not at all offended that his sheep are thus diseased and sick, nor does he on that account despise or reject them; but rather, devotes himself to their service, and administers to them the healing hand. For although they be so diseased and unsound, that

they appear to the whole world to be no sheep of his, yet this is only the knowledge of the world. Christ does not thus know his sheep, nor does he regard of what particular kind they are; but this is what he observes,—whether they have the name of sheep, and be sheep indeed. His eyes are on the sheep, not on the wool!

In a word, those are real shepherds, and they follow the footsteps of Christ, and know sheep as he knows them, who keep their eye upon the person, and not upon the diseases or the defects; and who thus make a difference between the sheep and the disease. “My Father (saith Christ) knoweth me, but the world knoweth me not.” When that time shall come, that they shall nail me to the cross, and punish me with an ignominious death, then shall they all say with one voice, ‘What! Is this the Son of God! No! he must be some condemned and apostate wretch out of the refuse of mankind, whose soul and body are both under the full power of the devil!’ The world shall hold and consider me to be some such vagabond as this. But my Father shall say, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased! He is my King, and my Saviour!’ He will not look at my affliction, my wounds, my cross, and my death, but at my person; that is, he will look at me my very self. Wherefore, although I may be in the very belly of hell, and in the very jaws of the devil, yet I must of necessity be delivered therefrom, for my Father cannot cast away all his care for me! And thus it is that I know my sheep, and they know me. They are fully persuaded that I am that good shepherd, and they know me as such: and therefore, they flee unto me and cleave close unto me: nor are they in the least terrified at being subject to diseases and imperfections of many kinds; because they well know, that I embrace none but sheep of such a sort.

And now he concludes and says, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”—Some have so handled this scripture, as to say, that it is to be fulfilled in the last days, when Antichrist shall

come in, and Elias and Enoch shall appear ; but all this is nothing at all ; and this opinion was engendered in the minds of men by that evil spirit, Jaoplanus, that they might believe, that all the world should in the end become Christian. And he tried to bring men into this persuasion, that the true doctrine being obscured, no one might be able to attain unto it. Wherefore, I charge thee to beware of this imposture. For this scripture was verified and fulfilled immediately upon the ascension of Christ, and is still going on to be fulfilled at this day. When the Gospel was first promulgated, it was preached to the Jews, and that people then became part of this fold. And where he here says, “ Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall be one fold ; ” he here shews that the Gospel must be preached to the Gentiles also, that they also might believe in Christ, that the Jews and Gentiles might become one church. Which thing Christ afterwards wrought by the apostles, who preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, and won them over to the faith. So that now, there is one body, one church, one faith, one hope, one love, one baptism, &c. And the same work is going on also to this day in power, and will still go on unto the last day. Wherefore, entertain not a persuasion, that all the world and all men will become holy members of Christ’s church. The cross, as a certain external sign, attends Christians : and therefore, there must be the greatest part of the world of that body who persecute the disciples of Christ. But the Gospel must still go on to be preached without intermission, that some may be continually won over to Christianity. For Christ’s kingdom is not yet perfectly accomplished, but will be fully perfected in the life to come.—This is a compendious explanation of this Gospel !

SERMON III.

CONCERNING THE SEVEN LOAVES.

MARK viii.

In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him; and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, &c.

I HOPE, my dearest friends, that the meaning of this Gospel is by no means unknown to you : for your understanding has taken root in these mysteries sufficiently deep, to make it easy for you to comprehend what knowledge you may derive from this Gospel, and what is therein set forth unto us. Namely, the true principle and nature of faith ! And this is the end for which Christ is set forth unto us by all the evangelists, as being so full of all tenderness. For although the various circumstances and events are described by them with some variation, yet the simplicity of faith which they all set forth, is every where the same. And this Gospel sets forth Christ unto us, in his own colours, with so descriptive a pencil, that each one of us may with certainty know, what he may promise to himself from him : namely these things.—That he is merciful, kind, presenting himself unto us, setting himself before us, and easy of access unto all who will flee unto him. And this is the view of him that faith should ever have before itself. The scripture sets before us two objects of contemplation. The one, full of fear : which sets before our eyes the terrible wrath of God, in the sight of whom no one can stand : under which contemplation, all of necessity despair, unless they be supported by faith. But, opposed to this is another object : that is, of grace : which object,

faith may behold with full and steady contemplation, may draw from it sources of consolation under all distresses, and conceive from it a confidence in the goodwill of God. Under which hope, a man may not only dare to promise to himself all good from God, but may believe, that there is in him an infinite treasure more of help, which he may readily have in every time of need.

You have often heard already, that there are two kinds of good things, spiritual and temporal. This Gospel teaches us little children how to believe for these very precarious and corporal things; and it is set before the weak, as though represented in a picture. Whence we may learn this goodness of God:—namely, how bountiful he is in bestowing his riches upon us. And hence, as soon as we have learnt how willing God is to take care of our bodies, we hereupon begin to think with ourselves, that he can also supply us with spiritual food and raiment for our souls. But if I cannot commit my body to him to be fed, how much less shall I be able to commit my soul unto him to be preserved for ever? Or, if I cannot be brought to believe that he will give me one pound, how, I pray you, shall I hope to have from him ten pounds? If I cannot with confidence promise to myself from a person a piece of bread, much less will my mind by any means be brought to believe, that he will leave me a farm or a whole estate. He therefore that cannot apprehend this tender, and, as it were, suckling faith, to him it will certainly be a most difficult matter to believe, that God will pardon his sins, and eternally save his soul. For we are persuaded, that the soul is of a thousand-fold more value than the belly; towards which, however, he shews mercy, as the Gospel of this day teaches.

Wherefore the apostle Peter, 1 Epist. ii. properly gives this admonition, “Beloved brethren, as newborn babes desire the milk, (not of the body, but of the soul, which is sincere and uncorrupt,) that ye may grow thereby.” For it is not enough that the infant be put to the breast and suck, but he must grow in size and gain strength; that he may afterwards be able to feed

on bread and more solid food.—To feed on milk, is to have a taste of the favour and grace of God. Moreover, to taste the good-will of God towards us, is to put it in practice in our lives. For although I may preach the good-will of God towards us, and his clemency and mercy, with a full mouth (as they say) for an hundred years together, yet that will profit me nothing unless I myself taste and have an experience of those blessings for myself. This is the source of true confidence in Christ. And hence you may see, how rare a bird a true Christian is. You may indeed find many who commit their bellies unto God. But all that is only on the surface, and the outside of the matter; it rests on the outside of the ear only, when it ought to sink down into all the deep recesses of the heart!

LET us then now consider this example; which teaches us the principle and nature of faith. The apostle, Hebrews xi. has left it written thus, “Faith (saith he) is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” That is, I am to expect a certain good which I can neither see with my eyes, nor hear with my ears; and of which I am to cherish the hope only; which is here exemplified in this Gospel of to-day. Here, about four thousand men, together with their wives and children, had sustained a three-days’ fast, (and was not this a fast indeed,) who were all but perishing with hunger, were a whole day’s journey away from their houses, and were deprived of every means of sustaining their bodies. Now Paul saith, that faith is a thing of that nature that a man is wholly to rest upon it as a foundation, and to hope for those good things which the eyes cannot see. And it was such a faith as this that the multitude had; who could see no provision, and yet still trusted in God that he would feed them.

Moreover, what does Christ? He indeed, as it behoved him, displayed a great depth of wisdom. He goes to the apostles and asks them how all these are to be fed. The disciples answer, Whence shall we buy bread here in the desert to satisfy all this multitude?

Here you may see how human reason and faith militate against each other:—the more exalted reason is in wisdom, the less is it able to submit to the works of God! The Saviour, therefore, for this very reason asked the disciples this question, that each of them might exert his own reason, and might thereby learn how widely human wisdom and faith differ from each other. And here we are also taught, how blind reason is; and how, when faith comes, we must utterly away with it.

Let this then serve us for an example.—If I be a husband, and have a wife and a swarm of children, and have nothing wherewith to support them, and know no one who will supply my need in any thing; it is my part to believe, and to hope that God will have respect unto me. Whereas, when I see that my hope is vanishing, and that food and clothes are not immediately brought unto me; hereupon, because I am a fool of no faith, I yield to desperation. Afterwards, I apply my mind to dishonest means to accomplish the matter;—to theft, to imposture, and other arts of the same kind, whereby the eyes of men are wont to be blinded; and thus, break out of my right path of life, in any way that I can. See, therefore, what evils shameful unbelief brings upon men. Whereas, if I have faith, I shut my eyes and say, ‘My dearest Father! I am thy creature, and the work of thy hands. It cannot be denied, but that thou hast created me. I place all my hopes in thee; who art more concerned about me, than I am about myself. It is nothing with thee, though I be driven to the greatest depth of want, to feed me, to clothe me, to provide for me necessaries, and to be my support for the whole of my life!’

Thus faith itself is a solid foundation: on which resting, I steadily expect those things which I do not see: and, in a word, it fully supplies all necessities. Nay the angels themselves should descend from heaven, and bread be dug out of the earth to administer supplies, before that man should perish with hunger, who leaned upon the prop of such a faith as this. Nay,

heaven and earth should be confounded together, before God should permit a man endowed with such a confidence as this, to suffer under the want of garments, or any other necessary of life. And it is such a confidence in God as this, that the adamantine and irrevocable promises of the word of God require. But if thou wilt bring thy reason into the matter, that will soon, like the apostles here, begin to prate thus.—‘This is impossible.’ And again, ‘Thou mayest sit still long enough, before a roast goose will fly into thy mouth.’ And this is because there is no object that it can see or touch, but all things appear to it to be void. The same as this was the distrust of the apostles. They thought thus with themselves. ‘How can it come to pass that so great a multitude of men can be satisfied with food?’ Whereas, if they had seen a large heap of gold before them, if they had seen loaves of bread, and dishes filled with meat, they would have believed that the present necessity might have been supplied; and they would have managed all things according to the best of their reason.

But let this suffice concerning faith in temporal good things.—Now let us speak in respect of those spiritual good things, whereby those who are “ready to perish” are to be supported and supplied. Here, death will present itself before our eyes, when we are concerned to live. Hell will appear, when we desire heaven. The judgment of God will be set before us, when we want to feel his saving grace. In a word, that which we want most to see, will be taken from our sight. And no creature can stretch forth unto us a helping hand against death, hell, and the judgment of God. But when I am acting faith I say to myself thus. Behold! faith is an immovable foundation! By leaning upon this, I shall attain unto those things which are far removed from my sight: and those things which are immediately before my eyes, how horrid soever they be, shall not in the least hurt me, while I thus believe. Wherefore, although I cannot attain unto any thing as yet, in sight, but death, hell, and the judgment of God; yet, I am to look at

none of these things ; but rather, with an undoubting confidence, my mind is to be settled thus ;—that God will freely give me grace and happiness, not because of my merits or works, but because of his PROMISE !

This is to cleave unto God with a sincere confidence, as is here beautifully set forth in this common and corporal description of the men in number four thousand, who, by a fixed faith alone in God, did not doubt that they should be supplied by him. Whereas, had they judged according to the capacity of their reason, they would have murmured among themselves and said, ‘ We certainly are a numerous multitude ; we are in a vast desert ; our bellies are empty and famishing ; and there is nothing here to satisfy our hunger.’ But they murmur not at all in this way ; they conceive a steady faith ; dispute not at all against God by human sense ; yield themselves up entirely to the divine will ; and, without any farther concern, commit unto him the supply of this urgent necessity of hunger.

But however, God, before this concern comes upon them, and before they begin to entreat of him, stands forward ; being more concerned for them than they are for themselves ; and he saith, “ I have compassion on the multitude ; and if I send them away fasting, there is danger lest they should faint by the way.” Here, I pray you, behold what a God we have ! How bountiful he is in goodness towards us ! How he takes care even to feed our impure bellies ! Here the hopes of the men are raised, and the words of Christ are consolatory unto them, when he says, ‘ They are here lying down and have now been with me three days, and therefore they ought to be filled before they go away.’ Here we may see, that all who cleave close to the word of God, are fed of God himself : for this is the power and nature of faith, which floweth from the word of God.

Wherefore, my beloved, let us also begin to believe : for unbelief alone is the parent of all the sins and wickednesses which at this day reign in all the orders of men. And why is it, that, which way soever you turn yourself, you meet with so many harlots and whores

mongers; such a multitude of impostors and flatterers; so many thieves, robbers, usurers, and murderers? It is unbelief in God that produces all these: because, men of this stamp, judge only according to human reason: and reason looks only to that which is present: but that which is out of sight, it cannot receive. And therefore, as it puts not its trust in God by faith, it must despair by trusting in itself: from which despair, there afterwards comes forth such a class of abandoned wretches as we see. And hence, as you see, when we commit the reins, not to faith, but to our own reason, we are driven away from the right path.

And now, as you have learnt what faith is, so now you must learn what love is. For Christ is set before us in a twofold point of view. The one, of faith; that we might not be too careful. The other, of love; whereby we may learn, that as he takes care of us in supplying us with meat, drink, and raiment, and that with a free love, not with a view to his own profit, nor as a reward for our merits; so we ought to shew every kindness to our neighbour, and that gratuitously from an impulse of love only. And, in a word, that as Christ is toward us, so we should be a kind of Christ to our neighbour.

Hence we may learn, that all the works both of those he-monks and she-monks are both vain and damnable; seeing that, they are not done to the end that they may serve their neighbour, but that they may thereby deserve the favour of God, for their own benefit. Whereas, the works of Christians whereby they would please God, are to be done only with a view to their neighbour's profit, but not with a view that they might thereby obtain great favour from God, and set off themselves. All gifts are to be given indiscriminately with a bountiful hand, and, as it were, to be thrown down that any may take them: as God does, who freely scatters and throws down his doctrine, the word and eternal life, before the promiscuous multitude. And blessed are they who embrace this gift with a grateful heart.

These things I say that ye may see, that the whole

Gospel tends to and requires, and that God also especially demands, this one thing,—that we devote ourselves entirely to the service of our neighbour, and so serve God; as the prophet saith, Psalm l. “Hear, O my people, I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, (for all that thou hast or canst offer unto me was first mine.) For every beast of the forest is mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. Thinkest thou that I will eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” &c. And thus also he speaks unto us, ‘Behold, O Israel, I am a God to thee, and not thou to me. I will give unto thee, but thou canst give nothing unto me. Hear, O Israel, I will not be wrath with thee because thou dost not load me with many sacrifices: for whatever is in thy stalls or in thy folds, is mine: and it was I that gave them into thy folds.’ Here however he rebukes the Jews, who pride themselves so much upon their sacrifices. As, therefore, he thus rejects their sacrifices, what does he wish to be substituted in their stead? Truly, that which follows in the same prophet; “Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High,” &c. That is, I will have thine heart. Offer unto me thyself. Embrace me as a merciful and atoning God, and as thy God; and then, I shall be satisfied!

Wherefore hold thy faith in confidence and hope, and thou shalt have him an indulgent God: cleave only unto him, and, in extreme perils, flee only unto him as unto a holy anchor. Believe, venture a reliance upon him, and risk all upon that reliance. Hold it fast, and doubt not, and he will be a refuge for thee. And, when thou hast done this, then serve thy neighbour with a free and willing mind. Believe, I say. Commit thyself wholly unto God, and expect his aid with an unhalting mind, and he will help thee. The truth of God will, to all eternity, be consistent with itself, Psalm cxv.

SERMON IV.

CONCERNING TWO SORTS OF MEN IN
RESPECT OF FAITH: AND WHAT TRUE
FAITH IS.

HEBREWS xi.

He that cometh unto God must believe, &c.

YOU may find many men, who, if they experience not external help and comfort from God, immediately think that it is all over with them as to their salvation, and that they are utterly forgotten of God. The reason of which is this.—Men of this kind seek nothing but their own, and do not commit themselves wholly to the mere good-will of God. And such men as these, do not go on the straight road to happiness without looking aside into different paths as they go. They are not always in the same mind, whether they abound or whether they suffer and endure want, esteeming alike poverty and wealth; as Paul did, who, (Philip. iv.) saith, “I have learned both to abound and to suffer need.” But they fluctuate to and fro. They praise God, and endeavour to please him by their works, as long as he bestows benefits upon them: as the divine Psalmist saith, Ps. xlix. 18, “Men will praise thee, while thou doest good unto them.” But as soon as God hideth himself in order to try them a little, whether or not they will serve him and believe in him, the moment these external advantages and delights are taken away, and he thus withdraws for a time the rays of his goodness, and leaves them to their own naked opinion, and destitute of all things; then, an unwillingness seizes their minds to serve God any longer, and their love, their praise, and whole of

their worship of God, is frozen up together. And such characters as these, are exposed to the greatest perils: and for this reason.—Since they serve God for external advantage only, when he will no longer give them any thing, (and that justly, seeing that he owes them nothing,) then comes in upon them an evil spirit, and takes away their faith; and then, they begin to doubt whether or not they shall be saved; seeing that, they no longer receive any comfort from God in their troubles. And when they begin to doubt of this, then the devil has the victory in his own hands, how many works soever of a splendid show they may perform. For the apostle James, in the first chapter of his Epistle, saith, “Let not him that doubteth, think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” This Satan well knows, and therefore he plies all his arts to accomplish this one thing,—to extinguish faith; and when he has done this, he cares not what works are done afterwards without faith, how great and excellent soever they may be. For where faith is wanting, there is nothing but darkness and a vain worship of God; even though you should wear yourself out even unto death by singing, or making a noise and howling. And yet, although these things are certain, yet will these men prefer these their works unto faith. But however, none but stupid sophists do this.

THE OPPOSITE.

Now, even as these above-mentioned characters have a regard unto their private advantage only in all that they do; and do not, as they ought, set God before them in all their ways as their only object; so, these following characters, in whatever they do or leave undone, seek the honour of God only, and not their own advantage. And this is a kind of opposite distinction. These latter are content with this only:—their knowing that God is good. And they cleave immovably to him alone, and to no created thing whatever; constantly remaining the same, which way soever their lot may turn. They love God, and extol his goodness with praises as much when God deprives them of all those external

supplies, as they do when he abundantly bestows these things upon them. They do not trust to their own works and to themselves when they are in possession of these things, nor, on the other hand, do they distrust God, when they are taken away. In what state soever they may be, they give themselves up to the good-will of God; so that they can from their heart and inmost soul say, ‘My Lord, and my most gracious Father! I have no will of my own, either to be or not to be, to live or to die, to know or not to know, to have or not to have;—thy will alone be done! I want not thine, but THEE thyself; Thou art not more dear unto me when all my affairs go well, nor art thou less dear to me when they go ill! It is just and right that thou shouldst oppose me, for thy power is as well above me as over me, but I have no right over thee!’—Now when a man descends thus deeply into himself, it will follow, that he will not dare to ask any thing of God, but that which he believes is to be given unto him as a free gift, and without any merit of his own: he will hold himself unworthy of all those things which God freely bestows upon him: and he will be persuaded, that all his words and works are, before God, nothing but mere folly and sin.

Men of this kind render the whole kingdom of Satan very narrow, nor can any thing whatever hurt them, because they stand by God alone more immovably than the Marpesian rock, leaning on him by steady faith. They ward off all the temptations which he levels against them, by faith, as with a shield, whereby all of them are overcome, as it is written Hebrews xi. And they are in truth real Christians and the sons of God, who are thus led by the Holy Spirit, as Paul testifies, Rom. viii.: for they seek not their own will, but follow on to do the eternal will of their Father who is in heaven: whom they serve, not to the end that he might give unto them heaven and temporal advantages, but on this account only,—because he is the great and ever blessed God! And therefore, if they knew for certainty that there were no heaven, no hell, no recompense of reward, yet would they nevertheless

be prepared to worship God, and that for God's sake only.—But in these matters, many men have not a right faith!

Wherefore, we will here speak a little upon these things: in order that the minds of men may be the more conveniently formed unto those paradoxes which we have just set forth.

Faith teaches us two things which the apostle Paul, Heb. xi. sets forth thus. “He that cometh unto God must believe that he is God, and that he is the rewarder of them that from their heart seek him.” First, when Paul saith, “must believe that he is God,” he strikes at the root of all pride, presumption, rashness, boasting, and false confidence, either in himself or in any other creature, and extols the one true God as omnipotent. It is easily said that “God is,” but to live a life fully corresponding with that saying, is hard indeed! Upon this one point, “God is,” rests the whole foundation of faith. For if there were no God, all the sorrows, the trials, the faith, and whatever pertains unto Christians, would be altogether vain and a thing of nought. There would be even no distinction between Gentiles, Jews, and Christians: and that would be altogether contrary to the scripture and to Paul, who distinguishes us who have faith from every thing that is destitute of faith, when he says, “He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is,” &c.

Moreover, the scripture commands, that all should refrain from the name of God, and not rashly meddle with it; much less therefore will it permit any one to arrogate it to himself, as the devil dared to do, Isaiah xiv.; who, assuming to himself the honour due unto God, desired to make himself equal unto the Most High. And if all are to refrain from touching the name of God, and no one is to arrogate it unto himself, then must he also refrain from those things which are God's, and which proceed from God, and not assume any of them unto himself. For God saith, Job xli., ‘All things under the heavens are mine.’ If therefore all things are God's, nothing belongs to any man, nor to any other creature.

And hence, if any man ascribe any thing to himself, and do not acknowledge that all things here upon earth, how small and trifling soever they may be, are received from God, but wishes himself to be something, and to attribute something to himself, that man robs God of his glory, his creatures, and his omnipotence, and arrogates to himself that, whereby he profanes the name of God.

Wherefore, since the apostle Paul and the scripture say that we must believe that "God is," the same most holy scripture and faith constrain and compel us to confess, that there is a Most High above us, without whose power, we have not the ability to perform any good whatever, be it never so small; that he alone gives us all the power whereby we do any one good work or avoid any one evil; that we are all poor, weak, miserable creatures, filled with sin, wickedness, and a sink of every evil; and that all our works are not indeed ours, but God's only, as Paul saith, Ephes. iii. "It is God only that worketh all in all;" and therefore, the works of all creatures are the works of God. And as the same Paul saith, 2 Cor. iii. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of God:" to whom all power, all ability, all wisdom, and, in a word, all the works of all creatures, are to be ascribed. Hence, whether we will or no, we are compelled to confess that weakness and nakedness, to which, according to Paul, Rom. viii. we are all subject; and to be content with that mercy and goodwill of God, whereby he has drawn us unto his grace.

Here, all power and boasting of man is brought to the ground, that he might glory in no one thing else but in the Lord; as Paul saith, 1 Cor. i. 31, "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." Thou canst boast of nothing whatever in thyself, (even if thou perform every work that can be performed,) but that thou art a sinner. Hence therefore, if a man believeth that "God is," without whom all our most devoted endeavours are vain, he is driven to despair in himself; and not being able to find refuge in any creatures, he buildeth himself upon that one God only who is Almighty; and relying

steadily upon him, he stands fast undismayed, placing implicitly all his comfort, his hope, his faith, his confidence, his whole refuge in him alone. He expects no good, no grace, no help from any one but from this one God only. And thus, without any word of his own, he is made and preserved a good man by faith only.

Hence it is collected, that faith is nothing more or less than a solid foundation for those things which are promised us of God : by which faith, God himself, and whatever is beyond the human capacity and apprehension, are known. And he who has received this anointing, attributes nothing whatever to the works of himself or of any other creature, but ascribes all to the works and undertakings of Christ ; being fully persuaded, that a man is made righteous only by Christ's having fulfilled for him, and in his stead, all those things which are necessary to his attainment unto happiness ; and that nothing whatever proceeds from his own merit, (which is nothing at all,) but from Christ ; through whom, all things both in heaven and earth are reconciled unto them who have made peace with God through the blood of his cross, as Paul saith, Colos. i. A man endued with a faith like this, rests on a foundation so solid and so deep, that no evil spirit, no man, no angel, nor even his own conscience, can ever disturb him.— And, more especially, in the approaching hour of death, when a man has most need to commit himself wholly unto Christ and to his most holy word and promises, do thou rest on what God has promised with a lively and steadily-relying mind ; for, as he “ keepeth his promises for ever,” we have no room to doubt that he will of his grace perform whatever he has promised to do, even though Satan and his mother (as our people say) should vent their rage against the Gospel, even till they have wasted themselves to death.

BUT here, the wise ones of this world use this Dædalian and super-christian argument, whereby they condemn all of heresy. ‘ These holy faith-praisers, (say they) inculcate among the people nothing but faith, and utterly pass over in silence all good works. Well ! (they

say) if faith alone be sufficient, then the devil himself will be saved : for he believes that “ God is,” and that he rewards all that do good works, and that seek him. And he believes too that God became man, and suffered death upon the cross,’ &c.—We answer : We desire such, not to permit this very great and deep wisdom of theirs to raise indignation in their minds. For we also know it very well to be true, that the devil does believe all these things. But we call upon you, ye very wise ones, to tell us,—Does the devil believe that God is God and Lord unto *him* for *his* salvation? that he is a rewarder of *his* good works? that he was made man, crucified, dead, and buried for *him*? Here all their mouths are stopped ! And be they as many as they may, they are compelled to answer in the negative, and cannot find one iota of the scripture to bring against us. Wherefore, it is not enough to believe that “ God is,” that Christ suffered death, and all those things. But thou must conceive an undoubting faith, that God is God unto *thee* for *thy* salvation ! That Christ underwent injuries, death, and the cross, and rose again for *thee* ! and that therefore, thy sins are transferred to him, as it was foretold by the prophet, Isaiah liii. The devil has no faith whatever of this kind !—Therefore, their whole argument falls to the ground !

When, therefore, faith is exalted above works, it is on this account.—A man, before he can do any work that is good, must first be justified ; before that, he can do nothing good ; for that word of Paul, Rom. xiv. is truth incontrovertible, “ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Moreover, this justification is by faith only ; for faith is the beginning thereof ; which takes place thus.—When God promises any thing to him “ that believeth and is baptized,” Mark xvi., that man immediately takes hold of that promise, knows it to be sure, and directs all the powers of his mind unto it ; firmly believing that it was set before him of God for his good ; and upon this oracle of God he so builds his mind, as to doubt not at all that it will be fulfilled ; knowing, that if he bring it into a doubt, it is all over with him, as

has been observed before. In this way this man rests on God; undoubtingly believing, that God, as he has thus gratuitously bound himself unto us by his promises, will of grace be faithful to those promises.—By this faith, the man is justified, as Paul saith, Gal. iii. concerning Abraham, “Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” God does not so much regard what great works we do, but always looks at our faith, how great that is. Between works there is no difference in the sight of God; those which appear great, and those which appear small unto us, are, in his sight, all alike.

It is the nature of Heathens to judge according to works, but of Christians to look at, and judge according to faith. Where faith is great, works will be great; but if faith be weak, works will be small. Such as faith is, such ever will works be. For Christ saith in his Gospel, Matt. ix. “According to your faith, it shall be unto you.” Hence a man will not be considered either righteous or ungodly accordingly as he has wrought much or little; all things are decided according to the rule of faith; as saith the prophet, “Thine eyes, O Lord God, are upon them that are of faith in the earth.” It is faith that hath efficacy, not works. The wise ones of the world lie, therefore, when they say, that we set aside works by exalting faith above them, and above merit. For wheresoever there is genuine faith, its fruits will, as a certain consequence, follow: namely, the love of God and of our neighbour. For it is impossible that true and undissembled faith should not shew forth its fruits and works. This, nevertheless, is truth;—that a man must be first righteous, before he can do any good work; and that, this righteousness is by faith only. From these things therefore it plainly appears, in what sense it is to be understood, when it is said, that faith sufficeth without works. And may God grant, that the wise ones of the world, may at length attain unto that faith! Amen!

But, in the second place, Paul saith, Heb. xi. that we must believe, not only that “God is,” but that “he

is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Here the wise of this world would drive the children of the kingdom too much aside from the right road, and would turn them into mercenaries and slaves, and make them to seek after God, not with a view to his mere goodness, but to the attainment of the joys of heaven. For these sharp-sighted instructors would know, by means of these invented and deeply subtle questions, how great, how exalting, and how manifold those joys are with which God will fill men. And also, how deep, how wide, and how long hell is; how horrible and terrible the devil is; how long his nose is; and with what kind of a maul it is that he breaks and bruises souls. They would set these things before our eyes as painters. And many other questions of the same kind do they agitate thus in vanity. And, in a word, such as are these their questions and conclusions, such also are all their sermons: the head, tail, and carcass of which, are all fables: and this they call, preaching the Gospel. In this way they strike such fear into the people, as to make the children of the kingdom fear hell, purgatory, and the devil. And they teach them, in what way they are to avoid these things by their works, and to get themselves numbered among the blessed. Thus, they exalt the gift above the giver, and heaven above God! And signify, that if there were no hell and heaven set before us, and no hope of reward from the hand of God, we ought neither to love him nor praise him for his benefits.

But this, is not to seek God with pure affection, but with a view to our own private advantage. But our wise disputers of this world have here also their subtle refuges, and elude us thus.—That God is indeed to be sought as the primary object, but, next to him, his *formal blessedness*, (as they term it,) by which they mean joy, pleasure, and sweetness; which are, as it were, attendants on the knowledge of God. As though it were not enough, that we seek God only in sincerity, but there must be a receiving of a reward or hire also, as mercenaries are paid by their employers. But let all true Christians beware of these old wives fables of the dispu-

ters of this world, which have no scripture whatever for their authority, for by such they are drawn away from the purity of faith.

What Christians ought to know is, that as God serves us of mere grace without any respect to our works, Rom. viii.; even so we on the other hand, ought to seek God, without any view to a reward, but with an eye to his goodness only; seeking no one thing else but his mere good-will. He requires nothing more whatever of thee, but that thou believe; as Paul here saith, "He that cometh unto God must believe." And what must he believe?—That God is the rewarder! Of whom?—Of those who seek him in faith! but not of those who seek God for his joy and blessedness, as the reward of their works! Be not thou concerned about the reward; that thou shalt have in due time, even if thou be not so eager after it. For although it is impossible that the reward should not come to them, who worship God with a pure and true heart without any consideration of gain or wages; yet, certain it is, that God hates those mercenary characters, who seek themselves and not God, and will never give them any reward at all. So also the son serves his father duly and spontaneously, as being the heir, and because he knows it to be pleasing to his father and agreeable to his will. Whereas if the son should be obedient to the father with an eye to the inheritance and the property only, he would highly deserve to be disinherited, and it would be right were he to be deprived of the lawful inheritance. Matters are the same between God and us, with respect to our attaining unto eternal happiness.—God is not the rewarder of our works according to our merit, but according to his own promises: wherein he hath promised, that he will reward our works, but, of mere grace: as in Gen. xv. "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward!" And may he be that unto us, to all eternity! Amen!

SERMON V.

CONCERNING THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE xvi.

HITHERTO we have heard, in the Gospels, various examples both of faith and of love. For their peculiar and perpetual scope is, to set before us continual representations of faith and love. Wherefore, I hope by this time you know full well, that no one can be accepted of God but he that is received on the grounds of faith and love. In the present Gospel, however, the Lord has set before us an example of faith and of ungodliness at the same time: that by looking at this representation of ungodliness, as opposite to that of faith and love, we may be rendered more willing to abhor the former, and cleave unto the latter.

We may here see the judgment of God, as displayed both towards the believing, and the unbelieving; a view both dreadful and consoling;—dreadful to the ungodly, but consoling to those that are anointed with faith. But however, that the subject may be the more easily received into our minds, the description both of that rich man and of the poor Lazarus, must be set before our eyes; and from that description, we must learn on the one hand the nature of unbelief, and on the other the nature of faith. We will divide, therefore, the Exposition of this Gospel into THREE PARTS.

PART FIRST.

This rich man is not to be considered by us as to his external life, for he is covered with a sheep's clothing; and if you look at his life, he appears to be a man of

great worthiness; though, in truth, he craftily conceals a wolf under the covering of a sheep. For he is not in the Gospel accused of adultery, of murder, of robbery, of violence, or as having even designed any such thing as may be condemned by the lowest rabble or by common sense. Because, he had an outside show of a very good life; such as that pharisee boasted of, who gloried in himself that he fasted twice in a week, and was not as other men. If he had fallen into any of those foul sins, the Gospel would certainly not have been silent about them; seeing that, it speaks of him in other respects so particularly, that it even reproves his purple raiment and sumptuous fare, although these are but certain mediate and external things, according to which God does not judge. Wherefore, we must conclude, that he carried outwardly a sort of decorous and holy conversation; and so much so, that he seemed both to himself and to others, to fulfil the law of Moses.

But we are the rather to look into his heart, and judge of his spirit. For the Gospel has the eyes of a lynx, penetrating into the secret recesses of the heart, and reproving those things which are approved by human nature. It beholds not the sheep's clothing only, but looks at the real fruits of the tree; and judges from them, whether the tree be good or evil; as the Lord teaches, Matt. xvii. Wherefore, if we judge of this rich man according to the fruits of faith, we shall find, that both the heart and the tree are corrupt by unbelief. For the Gospel declares this to be his sin, that he daily fed his body magnificently and sumptuously, and clothed himself luxuriously and splendidly: and these are things that reason never considers to be heinous sins. Justiciaries even approve such a way of living, and deem themselves worthy of it, as having merited it by their holiness of life. But they see not all the while, that they are, while wallowing in these things, in unbelief. This rich man, however, is not condemned because he thus indulged in this sumptuous fare and splendid raiment; (for many holy kings and queens were, in old time, adorned in royal apparel, as Solomon, Esther, David,

Daniel, and others;) but because his heart was taken with, and went after those things, and his substance was spent upon them; and because he sought all his joy, pleasure, and comfort from these things; and, in fact, made them his idols. For Christ by this expression "every day," signifies, that he was seen continually wallowing in this sumptuous fare and purple and fine linen. Whence we may conclude, that he sought after such a manner of life studiously, and with a certain delight; and that he chose it without being compelled into it by force or accident, or by any official requirements; or, that he desired to adopt such a manner of life, that he might serve his neighbour; but merely, that he might enjoy himself, and indulge his appetites for his own gratification.

Here, therefore, is brought to light the hidden sin that lay lurking in the secret recesses of his heart: namely, unbelief! This was the tree that produced such fruit. For faith cannot in the least endure this luxury of raiment, and these incitements of the appetite by made-dishes; and therefore, it most determinately despises riches, honour, pleasure, and power; and, in a word, all those things which are out of God. It seeks nothing, it contrives for nothing, it follows after nothing, but God only; whom it considers to be the chief good. It is quite indifferent about all food, whether it be the most delicious or the most plain. It esteems the finest linen, and the coarsest cloth, both alike. And if it ever happens, that those who fear God are clothed in rich and costly garments, and are raised to great power and honour, yet, they set no value upon those things, but enter upon them by constraint and unwillingly; and they either come into such a station of life unexpectedly, or to a certainty do it with a view to others; as is exemplified in queen Esther, who said that she bore the royal crown against her will; but was yet, compelled to bear this ensign of royalty, because of the King. So David would rather have lived a private life among his people; but, in obedience to the will of God, and for the good of the people, he undertook the charge of go-

verning the kingdom. In the same manner, all the saints are raised to high stations of power and honour by constraint, and remain all the while with their hearts unentangled by them : for in their stations of external power, they consult only the benefit of their neighbour : as it is written, Psalm xc. “ If riches increase, set not your heart upon them ! ”

But, where a man is destitute of faith, his heart goes after these vanities of the world ; they fill his thoughts, and he continues to seek them, and never rests till he has got them ; and as soon as ever he has gained his heart's desire, he begins to feed himself like a hog, and wallows in this mire ; he crams his belly, and places all his happiness therein ; he is quite unconcerned how it is between God and his heart, and never dreams of considering what hope and expectation he has from him, for his belly is his only god. But when he does not get those things which he wants, then he begins to think that all is not right. Thus you see, this rich man does not perceive these abominable fruits of unbelief, he casts a covering over all, and so blinds his own eyes by his pharisaical works and life, that he at last becomes quite hardened and callous, and his ears are shut against all doctrine, all admonition, all threatenings, and finally, against all promises. Behold, this is that secret sin which is reprov'd and condemn'd by the Gospel.

And now, there follows another sin. Love towards his neighbour is utterly forgotten by him. This rich man utterly despises the poor needy Lazarus that lies at his gate. And, although he thought it beneath him to help such an one with his own hands, yet, he ought to have remembered him, and to have enjoined his servants to take him in, and take care of him. But he does none of these things ; and that, because he understood nothing of God, and never had one true taste of his goodness. for he that has really felt the goodness of God, that man will be touched with the calamity of his neighbour. But, if he be in a state of hatred against God, so will he be disgusted with his neighbour also. For faith is of that nature, that all its expectation of good is from God ; in

him only it places all its hopes. By this faith, the man now knows God:—how good and merciful he is: by which knowledge, by-and-by his heart grows soft, and is so touched with a feeling of mercy, that he is ready to impart that unto all which he feels he has received of God. Therefore, he breaks forth into love, and serves his neighbour with all his heart, wholly devoting his body, his life, his wealth, his honour, his soul, and his spirit to his neighbour's benefit; and making him partaker of all that he has, just as God has dealt with him. Wherefore, he does not turn his eyes upon them that are well to do, upon the high in station, upon the powerful, the rich, the noble, the holy among men, who do not want his help; but rather, upon the sick, the fainting, the poor, the despised, and those that are labouring under the plague of sin; whom it is in his power to help, by exercising his softened heart in rendering them his assistance, and by shewing himself such toward them, as God has shewn himself towards him by shedding abroad upon him all his benefits.

On the contrary, the nature of unbelief is this.—It altogether distrusts God. By which distrust, the heart is blinded and rendered so insensible, that it cannot apprehend how bountiful and merciful God is; as it is written in the 13th Psalm; “they know not God.” Afterwards, by this blindness, the heart grows so hard, that such a man remains with a heart as hard as horn, and without any touch of mercy whatever: he becomes utterly a hater of mankind, and devoid of natural and human feeling; and more inclined to do his neighbour a hurt, than so to help him as to please him. For as he is insensible to the goodness of God, so he can feel no pleasure in doing good to his neighbour. And then the consequence is, that he does not direct his eyes to the sick, the needy, and to poor miserable creatures that are exposed to contempt, to whom he might be, and ought to be, serviceable and useful; but lifts up his eyes on high, and seeks after that which is exalted, rich, and powerful; from whence there may fall to him some advantage, profit, pleasure, or honour.

The example of this rich man, is a proof to us, that it is impossible that he who is destitute of faith should love his neighbour. And so, on the opposite, that it is impossible that he who is destitute of the affections of love, should be a believer. These two things will ever be united together in an indissoluble bond. He that is anointed with faith, loves all alike, and stands ready as a kind of common servant to wait on all. On the other hand, he that is destitute of faith hates all in his heart, and wants rather to be served by all; so far is he from being ready to serve all others. And although he be lying under these enormous sins, yet, he imagines that he so covers them, by his hypocrisy, with holy and specious works, as with a sheep's skin, that he is just like that vast bird the ostrich, which, when it has put its head into a bush is so stupid as to think that its whole body is concealed. And hence we may see, that nothing is more blind, nothing more destitute of mercy, than a man devoid of faith. For dogs, which are the most irascible of all animals, seem to have a greater feeling of mercy towards this poor Lazarus, than this rich man has. These seem to behold his poverty, for they lick his sores; while that blind and obstinately hardened hypocrite is so merciless, that he will not give the poor famishing Lazarus so much as the crumbs that fall from his table.

Like unto this rich hypocrite are all unbelievers, whom unbelief will not permit to be, and to do, otherwise than this rich man is said to have done, who is set before us as an example of all such. And, exactly like this man, are all those of our day whom they call spiritual, and that is manifest to every one. These never can perform any really good work. All their desires are directed to live the life of Epicures, serving no one, and doing a kindness to no one. Nay, utterly reversing the whole matter, they think it just and right that they should be served by all. Like harpies, they claw all things to themselves, and, according to the old adage, 'Rob the poor of his purse.' They are nothing moved at the poverty of others, and only think how they can

ve jovially themselves. And even if some of them have not a luxurious profusion of raiment and food, yet nevertheless, they have luxurious hearts and desires. And such as these are sought for by those Midases of ours, our princes, and others who have immense fortunes, who do many great works in hypocrisy; building temples, and raising grand structures for I know not what institutions; with which gaudy outside show, they basely conceal their iniquity, and their wolf of incredulity; until their hearts become so callous, that they lose every kind of natural affection for all mankind, and live like so many Timons.

PART SECOND.

And now, we are not to judge of this miserable and afflicted Lazarus, according to that outward appearance wherein he appears so deformed; we are not to look at his sores only, and his poverty and wretchedness; for you may find many men equally poor and wretched, and yet are nothing the better for it. King Herod was eaten up with the most dreadful disease of putrid consumption; but yet, he was not on that account the less valued in God's esteem. Poverty and bodily disease gain no one favour with God. But, he who was before accepted of God, his poverty and pain are precious in the sight of God, as the 116th Psalm testifies, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Hence therefore, we are to look into the heart of this poor Lazarus: in which, that treasure is hidden which made his sores of such great price in the sight of God. This treasure was faith and love. For without faith, no one can please God, Heb. xi. Wherefore, his heart was in that state, that, in the midst of these calamities and afflictions, he conceived a steady confidence in God; and, with an immovable mind, put himself wholly into the hands of his goodness. In doing which, he was so dependent and contented, that he was prepared to endure more and greater pains, if it should seem good to his merciful God.

This is true and living faith; whereby, through the

knowledge of the goodness of God, the heart becomes so broken and softened, that nothing can be enjoined so great and so arduous, which it would not be ready to undertake and to accomplish with fortitude. To such a degree does faith fortify the heart, if a man have but a feeling sense of the goodness and grace of God! And moreover, another grace accompanies this faith: namely, the love of our neighbour: so that, the man has a willing inclination of mind to serve all men. But because he is in want of all things, and is encompassed about with calamities, he has it not in his power to do these good offices to each other; and therefore, his willing mind is accepted for the deed.

But however, the man abundantly compensates for this deficiency in carnal service, by spiritual service. For now, since he has left this world, by his bitter hunger and misery he renders a service to the whole world. His corporal hunger, feeds the hunger of our spirit: his bodily nakedness, clothes the nakedness of our souls: the putrid sores of his body, are a medicine for the sores of our mind. Because, by his example he consoles us; teaching us, how we please God if we believe on him on earth, when we are exercised by calamities; and also admonishes us, how we are under the wrath of God, if we be destitute of faith here, and living in luxury. For we here see, that he, though covered with sores, was of great price in the sight of God; but that the rich glutton was hated of God.

Here, tell me;—what king, with all his wealth and power, could ever bestow upon the world a benefit so great and so widely extensive as this poor Lazarus has done with his sores, his hunger, and his poverty! O the wonderful works and judgments of God! How does the prudence of the flesh, and all the wisdom of the world, rot and sink into nothing! It stalks abroad with haughty brow, and fixes its eyes rather upon the gold and purple of splendor, than upon the putrifying sores of the wretched Lazarus. Those whose eyes stand out with fatness, can only receive and admire *that* wisdom. But when they see this poor object, they hold their nose

lest it should be offended with the stench of his sores, and turn away their eyes from beholding his nakedness. Hence it comes to pass, that they foolishly pass by and disregard this precious treasure which God thus puts in their path; while the same God, nevertheless, proceeds in his secret will and judgments, and raises this poor contemptible creature to that state of exaltation and honour, that all the kings of the earth are not worthy to bring him a napkin to wipe away the filth from his sores. For who, think ye, of the kings of the earth would not, from his heart, be glad to exchange his soundness of body, his purple, and his crown, for the sores, the poverty, and the wretchedness of this poor Lazarus, if it were but allowed him! And who among the men of the world is so mad, who would purchase to himself the purple, and all the pomp and ambition of this rich man, if he might have it for dung?

And thinkest thou that this rich man, if he had not been blinder than a mole, or if he had known that such a treasure, and a man of so great a price in the sight of God, was lying at his door, would not have gone out to wipe, and even to kiss his sores? Yea, he would have put him on the softest couch, and nursed him, and would have parted with all his purple and all his wealth to serve him. But at that time, when the judgments of God were on the way to their accomplishment, he must of necessity do as he did, and see nothing. The thoughts of God in the meantime were—Behold! Be thou unworthy of assisting him with thy service.—But when the work and judgment of God were accomplished, then the mad wisdom of the man begins to bethink itself. And when he was in hell, and wracked with torments, he would gladly have given his houses and all that he had to him, to whom, a little before, he denied a crumb of bread! And now, all things being directly reversed, he entreats that the same Lazarus, who a little before he disdained to touch, might cool his tongue with the tip of his finger.

Behold God is, even at this day, filling the world with judgments and works of this kind, but no one

regards them ; nay, nearly all men despise them. There are continually before our eyes poor and miserable men, whom God sets before our view as his most precious treasure, and we all the while know not what they mean. But when the work of God is done, and this treasure is taken away, then we all run up out of breath, offering our assistance, when it is too late to be of any service. Then we catch hold of their garments, their shoes, and their common furniture, and begin to look upon them as holy things ; we undertake long pilgrimages to go and worship them ; we build churches over their tombs ; and are occupied in many vanities of that kind ; but we are all the while only mocking ourselves. For those saints whom, while they were with us, we trampled under our feet, and looked on while they perished under the axe ; the garments of these same saints, when they are of no longer use, we begin to worship ; so much so, that there is danger lest we come under these woes denounced by the Lord with so much severity, Matt. xxiii. ‘ Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, ye build the sepulchres of the prophets and adorn them : your fathers killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore, ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye are the sons of them that killed the prophets. They punished them with death, and ye build their sepulchres.’

And this mind and spirit all the godly have. For all are true Lazaruses who shew forth the same faith, the same mind, and the same will. And therefore, he that is not like this Lazarus, shall, without doubt, have his portion with this rich man in hell. And all we indeed ought, after the example of Lazarus, to commit ourselves with steady confidence unto God, that he would work in us according to his will, and make us prepared to do good unto all men. And even though we may not all be poor, and covered with sores, yet we ought to be of the same mind that Lazarus was ; that, if God should require any such thing of us, we may endure it without a murmur. For with this poverty of spirit, even the most rich may be endued. Thus Job,

David, Abraham were poor rich men. David saith, Psalm xxxviii. "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were." What is the meaning of this? when he was a king of great power, holding the kingdom over many cities? The meaning is, his heart was not set upon these things; but, referring them all to the free bounty of God, he accounted them nought. In the same way also he spoke of his health of body; which, in comparison with the health of his soul in the sight of God, he considered a thing of nought; nor would he have murmured if God had afflicted him with a disease, or with sores. In like manner also Abraham, although he did not experience the same poverty nor the same pains as Lazarus did, yet would have thought it just and right, had he been exercised with the same evils from the hand of God. For all the saints must be of the same mind and spirit internally, although they differ in their external conveniences and inconveniences. Wherefore, Abraham acknowledges this Lazarus to be a man of his fraternity, and receives him into his bosom; which he certainly would not have done, had he not been of the same spirit, and had not the extreme poverty and maladies of Lazarus been well-pleasing in his sight.—Let it suffice to have spoken thus concerning the nature and sum of this Gospel; that we may see that it every where exalts faith, and condemns every one in unbelief.

THIRD PART.

This Gospel however furnishes matter of some farther questions.

The *first* is, what this "Abraham's bosom" is, for it is certain that it cannot be any carnal receptacle consisting of corporeal matter. In order to answer this question, we are to know, that the soul or spirit of man can find no rest, no place unto which it can flee, out of the Word of God; until, in the last day, it be received up to behold and dwell in the presence of God. Wherefore I conclude, that "Abraham's bosom" signifies nothing else than the Word of God: namely, that word

wherein, Gen. xxii. Christ was promised unto him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!" In this word, Christ was promised unto him, as he in whom all men should be blessed; that is, should be set free from sin, death, and hell; and in no other, nor by any work of their own, how excellent or laborious soever it might be. And, all those who gave credit to this promise, believed in Christ, and became true Christians: and therefore, by fully relying on this word, they were delivered from the power of sin, death, and hell.

Therefore, all the fathers who looked for the coming of Christ, were "received into Abraham's bosom;" that is, they conflicted with death by an unshaken faith: and, resting wholly on this divine oracle, they slept in peace, and are gathered up into that world as into a certain bosom, and, if they persevered unto the end, and died in that faith, will there rest until the final judgment: (those only excepted, who rose together with Christ, as is recorded Matt. xxvi.) In the same manner we when we come to conflict with death, must lay hold of the promise of Christ, and rest in it with a steady confidence; which speaks thus, "He that believeth in me, shall never die;" or any other promise of the same kind. In such a promise as this, I say, confidently enfold thy heart, and die in it; and thus, thou shalt creep into the bosom of Christ, and sweetly sleep; and be safely preserved therein, until the day of the resurrection. For the promise made unto us, and that made unto Abraham, centre in the same point; namely, in Christ, for it is by him that we are to be saved. The former promise however, is more particularly called "Abraham's bosom," because it was first spoken unto him, and he first rested in it.

On the contrary the "hell" which is here spoken of, is not that place which is appointed for the torments of the damned, after the final judgment. Nor is it probable that the body of this rich man was, at this time, cast down to the bottomless pit, but rather, buried in the earth. Hence, the hell must be some place where the

spirit must remain ; from which, nevertheless, there can be no return unto life, and which cannot admit of the substance of the body with the soul. It appears to me, therefore, that this hell is nothing but the remorse of the conscience that is destitute of faith and the Word of God, and in which the soul, as it were, is imprisoned and confined until the last day : after which, the man will be cast down both soul and body into the bottomless pit of hell. For as “ Abraham’s bosom ” is the Word of God, in which those that are of faith rest, sleep, and are preserved unto the day of final judgment ; so, on the other hand, hell must be that place, where there is not the Word of God, and wherein the ungodly are tormented in unbelief until the last day shall come ; and this place, can be nothing else but the conscience, without faith, and filled with the guilt of sin.

The *second* question is this. How then can it be, that Abraham and the rich man conversed with each other ? It cannot be that they exchanged words in a real and corporeal voice, because the human body of each of them was in the grave : and thus also, his tongue, which the rich man complains was tormented in the flame, could not be corporeal ; nor was the finger of Lazarus corporeal ; nor the water real which he asked for to cool his tongue. Wherefore, all these things must of necessity take place in the conscience ; and, in this manner.—When, in the agony of death, the conscience is opened up, it is made conscious of its state of unbelief ; and then, it truly sees “ Abraham’s bosom ” and those that are concluded in it ; that is, the Word of God, in which it ought to believe. And here, as it has no faith in that Word, it is in such anguish of torment, and is driven into those straits, that it is, as it were, in hell ; not being able to find any help or comfort in any way. And when it comes to this, these thoughts arise in the conscience, and it would break out, were it allowed to speak, into such expressions as these which the rich man addresses to Abraham : and it craves from the Word of God, and from all who believe in it, some alleviation of its distress : and that with so much concern, that it would willingly receive any the least comfort

from the very meanest of men; but cannot get even this. For Abraham answered him, (that is, his conscience is enlightened by the Word of God to have such feelings,) that this cannot be; because he had his portion of good things in this life, and is now deservedly to be punished; while those whom he, when alive, despised, are to be raised again from the dead. And at last the conscience has a feeling, as though it heard words saying, that there is a gulph unalterably fixed between it and those that are of faith, so that no one can pass from the one to the other.

These thoughts arise from desperation: that is, from a full knowledge and persuasion in the person, that he is excluded for ever from the Word of God, and that there is no remedy or help whatever to be obtained. Hereupon these thoughts boil up more and more in the heart, and the person wants to have these dying agonies made known to the living, and miserably requires some one to be sent from the dead, to make them known unto them. But here again there is felt a repulse; and the person immediately hears this answer in the ears of his conscience—that they have Moses and the Prophets, in whom they ought to believe, and in whom he himself ought to have believed.

Behold! All these things are what passes between the condemned conscience and the Word of God, when the storms of death come over it. No living man can know what these things are, nor any but those who experience them; and those who do experience them, would have others to be told what they are—but that cannot be.

The *third* question is. At what time these things took place? and whether or not this rich man continues to be in such torments unto this day, and will continue in them until the last day of the world shall come?—This question is very subtle, and very difficult of solution to the minds of the ignorant. For in the consideration of this question, all idea of time is to be kept out of the mind; and we must remember, that, in the next world, there is no such thing as time or hours, but all things are swallowed up in an eternity; as Peter

saith, 2 Epist. iii. Wherefore, it appears to me, that under the example of this rich man, is shown us what takes place in all the ungodly when their eyes are opened in the agony of death; and that this remains but for that moment, and then goes off again until the day of judgment; but that, the whole is as God shall please, and that we cannot here set up any certain standard. Wherefore, I would not presume to declare positively, that this rich man is wracked with these torments to this day; nor, on the other hand, would I say that he is not; for each of these is as God may will. Suffice it for us to know, that we have here an example, of the certain execution of those torments that are inflicted on the ungodly.

SERMON VI.

ON THE STRENGTH AND GROWTH OF FAITH AND LOVE.

EPHESIANS iii.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to

do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

HITHERTO, the apostle Paul has described in this Epistle, the office of the ministry which the Gospel in the New Testament sets forth. And he presents to our view in the most sublime and exalted language, what an ocean of benefit, of power, of wisdom, yea of all blessings, that office brings unto us: namely, that God by this ministry sheds upon us copiously all wisdom and power, and all that good which he hath in abundance, both in heaven and in earth. For the Gospel proclaims unto us life from death, righteousness and freedom from sin, deliverance from hell and every evil, and translates out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God. Which things are so great, that Paul cannot find words to describe them; and he speaks of them in language so sublime, that expressions more exalted could not be used. And then, to all this he adds, as it were, a certain concluding climax; praying, that all these great things may not be preached and be brought to the external hearing and judgment only, but may reach to the heart also, and may work in the internal recesses of the mind in the same way as their external sound reaches the ear. For, it is of little service that they be taught by the sounding voice only, and be heard by the ear, if they do not enter into the heart and break forth into works. The kingdom of God, as Paul saith, standeth "not in word but in power." For all these things ought internally to be believed in the heart, and that faith ought to exercise itself externally in love, so that the whole may be power and not word, life and not talk! These things were so ordained, that the word might not rest on the tongue and in the ears only, but become power, and that works might proceed from it. In the Old Testament also Moses said many things in words, but no one did the works. But here, we are to say little, and work much. Hence it is, that Paul here prays, that the Gos-

pel may not be preached in vain, but may accomplish that for which it is preached.

Behold ! what a pillar Paul is to Christianity, and what an example and rule he gives, especially to ministers themselves, for the way of building up the church ! We rashly commit the matter to the mercy of the winds. For as soon as we have heard the Gospel and have learnt to talk a great deal about it, we think that it is sufficient, nor do we suffer this our coldly conceived knowledge to proceed any farther, so as to go forth into works also. And most certainly our great deficiency is here :—we do not continue instantly in fervent prayer. Whereas, it becomes us to ply continually the ears of God, to groan to him day and night, and to entreat him to give efficacy to his Word, that it might operate on the heart ! as David saith, Ps. lxxviii., “ Lo, God will give power unto his voice, which he sendeth forth.” And this ought to be the great concern, not only of all preachers of the Gospel, but also of all Christians : and for the attainment of this, there should be continual prayer, that God, who has given us the knowledge, would also grant us the power ; in order that, his Word may not only rest upon our lips, but be brought to “ effectual working.” For this is now every where the great complaint, that there is a plenty of preachers but no effectual workmen. Nay, on the contrary, the hearers of the word are rendered so frigid, lifeless, and dead, that, to their shame be it spoken, they are less inclined to diligence now than they were before ; and that too, when so great and so clear a light has risen upon us, that if we be not blinder than moles, we may all see what is good and what is evil throughout the whole world. Wherefore, we have more than an abundant cause for betaking ourselves to prayer, as Paul does here ; where he says, ‘ You have now an abundance of blessings, and the Word is poured upon you as a flowing torrent ; which is so preached to you, that it is set as meat immediately before you. “ For this cause, I bow my knees,” that God would accompany it with his blessing, and would have respect unto his glory and

honour ; and that he would strengthen and confirm you, that the Word may beget in you in due time, as in fruitful trees, fruits meet for Christians.

And here observe *how* he prayed. He adapts the gesture of his body to his prayer. And although those gestures which are made outwardly, are mere hypocrisy when they are alone, yet nevertheless where the prayer is true and lit up from the fire within, where necessity is the chief thing that urges, then the gestures of body given unto us are good, and, through the word, make an impression upon the people. By this also, we are ourselves inflamed, and bow our knees and pray for them who have heard the Word. Wherefore, as soon as the Word is lit up in the heart, and burns, the body will rightly form itself unto it by the lifting up of the eyes and hands, and the bowing of the knees, and there will be no need of any care to form the gestures. This is how Moses, and David in his psalter, prayed. When thou hast thus prepared thyself ; that is, when thou prayest out of a fervent heart, the external gestures will come of their own accord, for the spirit will press them forth. Wherefore, they are not altogether to be banished from prayer, excepting when they are performed without the Spirit from mere hypocrisy, as though we thought by them, as a meritorious work, to gain the hearing of God, when the heart is not engaged in them : as the Prophet saith, Isaiah xxvi., “ This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

Paul saith, moreover, I bow my knees “ unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And thus I have always taught you,—that no one should ever attempt to speak any thing, or pray at all before God, unless he approach him under that name that Paul here does : namely, as “ the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For Christ is our only mediator, and no one can approach, pray to, or be heard by the Father, but he who comes unto him in the name of the Mediator, acknowledging him as his Lord, and as being given unto us of God that he might intercede for us, and might rule both our body and our soul. The prayer that is thus offered up, is ef-

fectual prayer. But it is no easy matter to enter into this sweet name, and to conceive in our minds of God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is a word full of consolation that Christ is our Lord. But we have made him a cruel one, by imagining to ourselves that he is a rigid and angry judge, holding in his hand a sword, sitting in heaven with a terrible countenance, and threatening to hurl his bolt at our heads. Whereas, the very end for which he rules over us, is, that he might defend us from the assaults of other lords and tyrants, that is, of the devil, the prince of this world, of death and sin, and of all other evils that threaten us. For we are his peculiar property. He, therefore, will take us under his care, will make us better and better, and will preserve us safe from all peril and tyranny. Wherefore, that name is sweet unto us and replete with much consolation, rendering the conscience peaceable in them that believe.

And this brings with it a consolation above all the most abundant—that my God and my Lord is a Father. From which name, there shines and bursts forth all divinity: so that, whatever I can desire in that name is given unto me. This name is full of pure help and grace: for, as a Father, God will put me in possession of all things temporal and eternal. Paul saith, moreover, that he is not only Father, but a true Father, and above all that is called father both in heaven and in earth. The fathers which we have upon earth, are fathers who have begotten us according to flesh and blood. And they also are accounted fathers whom we call so from their age, or by way of honour: for every one does right in calling his aged master, father, as we see the servants mentioned in the book of Kings did. Paul therefore would here say, that whatever is called father upon earth, is only a mere shadow and faint representation when compared with this Father. But reason can never see this, nor can any one conceive it in his heart, unless the Holy Spirit work it there. This, indeed, reason can do,—it can call God a horrible and angry judge, who makes the world and all hell so narrow

unto it, that it knows not at all where to abide. Nay it is impossible unto nature to call God from its heart, Father! Much less can it account him a Father transcendentally above all that is in heaven and earth, in comparison of whom all other fathers are but the faintest shadows.

And now, consider how a father carries himself toward a son, and a son toward a father. For although a man may not be a father in natural affection, yet the very name carries in its signification so much confidence, refuge, and comfort, that nothing but good seems to be included in it. If, therefore, the affection and favour which earthly fathers bear towards their children, is but a faint representation and shadow, what must this heavenly Father be who is infinitely above all fathers! Paul, therefore, would take us by the hand as children in leading-strings, (according to the German proverb,) and teach us how to walk; that from this natural confidence of children in their parents, we may form a conception of what God is as a Father, and what we ought in hope to expect from him. He who knows how to get his heart away from its natural opinion of God, and also from himself, in this manner, and can conceive such an opinion of, and confidence in God, as to be emboldened to address him from his heart, 'Thou art my only beloved Father!' What, I pray you, would he be afraid to ask of him! and, what could God on the other hand deny him! Such an one's own heart would tell him, that whatever he should ask would be done! Of such efficacy is this firm hope and confidence of heart! And so assured is it, that it never shall have a denial of that, for which it may approach to ask! Behold! In this way it is we are taught how the heavens are to be broken open, that we may meditate upon God as there concealed, and view him in his real character!

In the same way also Paul is persuaded, that what he prays for is well-pleasing unto God, and shall be done: and if we were to follow his example, and do as he did, without doubt we also should be heard. And although there are still some holy men who ply the ears of

God with prayer, yet it would be well for us if there were more of the same kind, that the Gospel might spread more, and that we might feel more of its power. Though we see, to the glory of the great and ever blessed God, that it does now so run, that those who oppose it get nothing but shame for their pains: and the more they go on raging, the more strength it gains, and the more widely it spreads; and that, contrary to all our wisdom and hope. And this no doubt is, because God moves the hearts of some of the godly to pour out their prayers unto him. These are the cause why the Gospel proceeds so powerfully without our help. For the more fervently we pray, the more ready inclination has God to hear.

But what kind of a prayer is this which Paul here uses?—Those very petitions which we use in the Lord's Prayer, especially in the first, second, and third clauses of it; the whole of which he here sums up in one compendious petition; in other words indeed, yet to the same purpose; namely, that the kingdom of the devil, with all its malice, and whatever fights against the Word and will of God, may come to nought.—He prays,

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might.

These are remarkable words, which he utters out of a fervent spirit, and, as it were, agonizes forth with groanings: which shews, that he desired to express these things more sublimely, and to find words whereby he might shew what were the secret and unspeakable motions of his heart; but all words are too weak, and fall short; there is always more felt in the heart than can be expressed. He saith, "According to the riches of his glory:" as though he had said, So great is his glory, that the riches of it who can recount? For the glory of God is, that he bestows blessings with a certain bounty and overflowing abundance. Wherein thou mayest perceive what God is,—that in him thou mayest find a treasure of all good, and, if thou art in distress, power to revive thee. But this the whole world

now calls God. Hence it is that there are so many imaginary gods, and so many gods invoked, because they are such from whom they imagine they shall receive profit and salvation. And hence, the scripture calls even men “gods,” because they bestow benefits and mutually assist each other. Even as God himself says to Moses, *Exod. vii.* “See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.” And if any god be bountiful and free in giving, he gets to himself greater honour and glory.

But this our God is the true God to whom alone all glory is due, and who has the riches not only of grace but of glory; so that he can pour out of all that is in heaven and in earth abundantly and beyond measure. And he is a bountiful bestower even of the most mean of his creatures, that is, of water, air, and earth, of which we can turn but a very small portion to our use. And yet, so blind and insensible are we, that we see not these great gifts, nay, we despise them even, and account them things of nought. How much more like himself then must he be in the gifts of his Spirit! Here, as great as he is, he pours out himself, and gives himself unto us together with his most precious gifts and riches, and lights up so vast a lamp before us, that we can know, even if we use not our eyes, what the world is, what the devil is, what an angel is, and so what God himself has decreed; and moreover, what has been done, and what shall be done. In a word, we are endued with all wisdom, and have power over sin, the devil, death, and all the creatures of the Lord. What shall I say?—He hath blessed us with riches so great, that no one can find language to express them.

Observe, what powerful words Paul makes use of in this prayer, and with what an emboldened heart he draws near unto God; so that it cannot but be effectual to penetrate the clouds and open the way into heaven. He does not say that God should look at our merits or worthiness, and should, according to them, grant what he prayed for; but he saith, “according to the riches of his glory. For although we be unworthy, yet God is worthy whose greatness should be acknowledged, and

to whom glory should be ascribed for his pouring forth his riches so abundantly and freely, that his own name might be sanctified. Thus thou oughtest to order thy prayer in a way that God will approve, if thou wouldst be heard by him : for if he should hear us according to our merits, he would not deign to give us a piece of bread. But if bounty in giving becomes him, he must give in a way wherein thou wilt be compelled to acknowledge that the gift was of mere grace. And thus, thou wilt praise in the highest his infinite glory !

But what does Paul desire to obtain of God through his prayer ? Why this :—that the Word may not only be among them, (although this is a great blessing, if it be preached in liberty,) but that they may taste it in their hearts, and exemplify its power in their lives. Thus, he makes a distinction between the word, and the power of it. Many have the word, but few the power of it, and evidence it in deed as it is preached in word. Our adversaries cannot cast upon us a greater reproach and derision, than that we preach and hear a great deal, but proceed no farther ; and that there is no one who lives accordingly, or becomes better thereby ; nay, that many of us grow worse than we were before ; wherefore, (say they) it would have been better first to enter upon a good life : I answer thus :

How shall we confute this charge ? First, since we see that matters go on so coldly, and that the Word is far from being attended with power, there is great occasion presented to us of giving ourselves to prayer, as Paul here does and teaches. And, secondly, although these persons may see but little emendation and fruits, yet they themselves are not persons qualified to judge of this matter. They imagine, that the only duty of Christians is to perform miracles, and to raise the dead ; and, that whatever places they tread on, should become roses ; and, in short, that they themselves should be nothing less than pure and perfect saints. But if we were such, what need should we have of prayer ? For why should I pray to obtain that which I already possess ? Rather, I should be offering up thanks for things already received. But

since Paul and the scriptures command us to pray, they shew that we are deficient in power : otherwise, to what purpose are so many words spent in vain ? Hence Paul himself here confesses, that the Ephesians were weak ; and he makes the same complaint in other of his Epistles, especially in that to the Corinthians ; and every where impresses upon them, that they should both act and live as they have been taught. But what urges him to this ? Surely nothing but his seeing himself those things which we see in our day — that there is a declining on all sides, and not that fervency of spirit which there ought to be.

But yet, although all do not live up to the standard of the Gospel, still many live better than they did before : and it produces this fruit, that it brings the consciences of many into peace, and there is a forsaking of many sins which before were indulged. And if the lives of both parties were strictly scrutinized, we should find the greatest treasure to be on our side. For be it so, that some infirmity still cleaves unto us, are we on this account to condemn wholly ? What will you find in the other party but a sink of every kind of filth ? Which, nevertheless, they would willingly set off by a comparison with our infirmity. And hence, they would make all their deeds precious jewels, and ours to stink. But let them go on to judge as they have begun !

We honestly confess, that we are not altogether perfect. This, however, is most certainly true ; that, if we had no infirmity, we should have no need of prayer, no need of exhortation, urging, and continual preaching ! If they suppose that the Gospel is to be condemned on account of our weakness, which weakness we ourselves do not deny, they themselves are under the same condemnation before God, wherewith they condemn us. There is nothing against my standing in the kingdom of grace, and yet being, outwardly, so infirm as to appear to you a kind of vile outcast. For thou canst not see my faith. But God, who alone searcheth the heart, sees it, and I myself have a feeling persuasion of it. Meanwhile, thou judgest me according to those works which

appear outwardly, and thus thou directly passeth sentence on thyself. We ourselves well know and complain how weak and imperfect we are, and therefore cry, pray, and groan that God would communicate to us strength and power.

Again, we are also assured, that, where the Word of God is preached, there its fruits must of necessity follow. Since, therefore, we have the Word of God, it of necessity follows that the Spirit of God is with us. And where the spirit is, there, of necessity, faith must exist, how weak soever it may be and imperceptible. And therefore, it cannot be denied, that there are Christians among us who offer up prayers daily unknown to us. Justly, therefore, does God deal with the other party in permitting them to run aside and be deceived. They, poor wretches, meanwhile look around them to see if they can find any Christian, and no one meets their sight: for the Word is too high to suffer itself to be judged of by us, seeing that it rather judges us. And yet, the world feels indignant at being judged and condemned by us, while they themselves nevertheless want to judge and lord it over the Word of God.

But this is the will and pleasure of God. For they are not worthy to behold one Christian; and for that very reason, God so blinds them, that they might not be able to come to his kingdom; as it is written in the Psalm, 'that the wicked may perish from off the earth, that they see not the glory of God.' Hence also it comes to pass, that princes and bishops discern none but a certain few who have money; or, more commonly, some wild unruly outcasts, who may happen to be a great nuisance unto them. For they are unworthy the glory of God, that is, to see a true Christian, on whom God pours forth himself with all his blessings. And if a real and true Christian were to come before them, so as to be close under their eyes and touch them, yet they could not discern him!

And, if they hear that such an one is of a blameless life, they immediately say, 'Heretics have made themselves such, and have concealed venom under a fair out-

ward show.' If they see any one of a life somewhat inconsiderate and uncircumspect, they immediately say, 'He is a reprobate.' Take them which way you will, they are offended. If you pipe unto them, they will not dance: if you mourn unto them, they will not lament. They will neither hear bitter, nor sweet. Thus it must ever be with "wisdom,"—she must be justified of her own children, as Christ saith. And thus does God infatuate and confound the world, still permitting himself to be judged by them; while he, in the meantime still works on, and causes his Gospel to spread its roots, though they be destroyed in their folly. These things I speak, to the intent that we may act cautiously, that we be not carried headlong with them, by judging, after their example, the Word and work of God. For although we may labour under infirmity, yet are we nevertheless sure that the kingdom of God is among us: seeing that, we have his Word, and daily pray to him that his Word may be attended with power, and that we may increase in faith.—Then follows,

To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

The apostle here uses a force of words, in order that he might leave very little play to Free-will. He prays that they may have might communicated to them from heaven by the Holy Spirit. For the world have their strength and their spirit too: namely, the devil, the prince of this world, who fills with darkness and hardens the hearts of men, and by inflating himself and giving courage to them, he persuades himself that he can break in upon the Christians with ease, and grind them down to destruction. But as the children of this world are courageous and arrogant, so also are Christians; but far more vehemently and powerfully so, through the Holy Spirit; and they are free from all fear whatever of the world, the devil, death, and all things which are against them. This is called spiritual courage.

The Hebrew word for 'spirit' may be rightly rendered in Latin, 'upright mind;' that is, which is

confident and courageous. For spiritual courage, is not flesh and blood; but the heart and the very courageous alacrity of the mind. As on the other hand weakness, signifies a mind desponding, dejected, and not able to trust firmly. The meaning of Paul therefore is, This I pray for and desire of God, that ye may have that confident and courageous mind, and that emboldened and heroic spirit, which may be free from all fear, whether poverty, or contempt, or sin, or Satan, or death assail you; and that ye may be persuaded, that no evil, no poverty, can hurt you. The spirit and courage of the world, remain and endure so long only as that in which it trusts is at hand. Hence, there is a proverb among the Germans, 'The pocket gives courage;' that is, such confidence always arises from mammon, and secular power; and it is daring and insolent, and conceives great spirit on account of temporal things.

But the former spirit trusts in God only, and has nothing whatever laid up against an accidental necessity, but God alone. Staying wholly on him, it holds up the finger at all opposition, and is strengthened with a mind far more courageous than the world has. This is that strength for which Paul prays; which is not seated in the flesh and blood, but in the inner man. It is having a heart happy and free from fear, which rests in the goodness and grace of God, fears nothing whatever, and possesses all fulness, riches, and satisfaction; namely, God himself, with all his gracious benefits.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

The Holy Spirit puts Christ into the heart, teaches it to know him, lights up its flame, and gives it courage. And what Paul every where aims at, is, to enforce, that no one should attempt to approach God the Father, without apprehending Christ as the only Mediator. Now, when Christ dwells in my heart and directs the whole of my life, although my faith be weak, yet, never mind;—Where Christ is, is not all bone; there is some flesh; and therefore, festers, ulcers, and sins; of which, nevertheless, he is not ashamed; although those great

saints hold their noses lest the smell should offend them. Moreover, where Christ dwells, there is a plenteous fulness, whether the strength be small or great.

And Christ dwelling in our hearts, is nothing else but our knowing him,—what he is, and what good there is treasured up for us in him! Namely, that he is our Saviour, by whom we have attained unto such blessedness, as to call God our Father; and that by him also we have obtained the Holy Spirit, which renders us courageous against all storms. Thus, he dwells in our very hearts. He can be conceived of, and received no where else; for he is not a dead thing, but the living God. But how is he apprehended in the heart? Not by thoughts, but by living faith only. He does not permit himself to be apprehended by works, nor to be received in by the eyes; he will be held by the heart only. If, therefore, thy faith be true faith, and thy foundation solid, thou hast, and thou feelest, Christ in thy heart; and thou knowest also, all things that he doth both in heaven and in earth. Thou knowest, moreover, in what manner he rules all things by his Word. And thou knowest the feelings of those that have Christ, and of those that are without him!

This then is what Paul here desires, which works so effectually in the heart, that it produces all that is contained in the Word, sets us free from the tyranny of sin and death, and renders us certain of grace and eternal life! And when a feeling sense of these things touches the heart, it is impossible but that it must lift itself up and become courageous. But he that is destitute of a sense of these things, falls to consulting within himself what is best to be done; whether he should pray to God himself, or get some one else to procure for him this faith and courage.—We have now finished the first part concerning *faith*. The next is concerning *love*—

That ye being rooted and grounded in love.

This is a different form of speaking from that to which we are accustomed. Ought we not to be rooted and grounded, and to lay our foundation by *faith*?

How comes it to pass, then, that Paul assigns this to love? I answer: It is true. But love is the criterion whereby to decide whether or not the faith be true faith, and the heart happy and going forth in alacrity towards God. For where thy believing confidence is so strong, that thou doubtest not in the least that God is thy Father, it will of necessity follow, although thy faith may languish, that it will break forth in thy mouth, actions, and hands, and will assist thy neighbour both in deed and in counsel. This is what Paul here calls laying a foundation, and being rooted and grounded in love; that is, tasting and feeling that we have a faith unctuous and sound. For love is, as it were, a touch-stone, whereby we discover whether faith be true or false; as Peter saith, 2d Epist. i. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Otherwise, the matter always remains in uncertainty; it floats in the ear and fluctuates in the dreams of the heart, but there is not a firm foundation laid, nor a being rooted and grounded. This is what Paul desires in this two-fold prayer.—First, that we may have in the heart a right faith toward God; and secondly, that that faith may break forth and shew itself in love toward our neighbour.

That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.

This again is a part of his prayer; wherein, he would have them so to advance, that by faith they may be gladdened and rendered happy toward God, and truly settled and kindled in love toward their neighbour. As though he would have said, After ye have attained unto that strength, go forward and press on with that which ye have begun: pursue with all saints these four things, that ye may increase them, and understand them more day by day. This however is only to be attained unto by faith. Love has not any thing to do in this matter, although it is an assistance, as being an evidence whereby we are assured of our faith.

The learned ones would, from these words, delineate

and measure out to us the holy cross, (about which, however, Paul does not here say one word,) that we may be able to arrive at the exact knowledge of all things concerning it—how long the kingdom of Christ is, how wide, how deep, and how high. But this I attain unto, when my heart is so instructed, that Christ cannot so contract, dilate, and extend himself, but I can follow him; and cannot descend so deep, or rise so high, as that I should be suffered to be torn away from himself and his Word; so that, I know and am persuaded, that wheresoever I betake myself, Christ is there; that he rules in all places; and that, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high soever he may turn himself, either for a time short or long; or, how extensively and distantly soever his going may stretch itself out, I shall every where find him: as David also saith, Ps. cxxxix. “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there,” &c. His kingdom is eternal; its length, its breadth, its depth, its height, are interminable. If, therefore, I descend into the depths of hell, my heart and my faith say, ‘Christ is here.’ The sum, therefore, of these things is, whether I sink or whether I rise, you may judge of me as you will, and hurl me here and there, but, wheresoever I am, there I find Christ! For he has in his hand all things both in heaven and in earth, and all things are subject unto him, —angels, the devil, the world, sin, death, and hell!

Wherefore, since he dwells in my heart, my mind remains upright and immovable. Whithersoever the storm may drive me, I cannot perish; for wheresoever Christ my Lord is, there shall I be. But reason can never come up to this; for if it be but lifted up one cubit’s height from the earth, it is driven into despair. We, however, have stronger spirits through Christ, and we know that he is every where, whether honour or dishonour, hunger, weeping or sorrow, life or death, good or evil fall upon us. For this therefore the apostle Paul prays, that, through the grace of God, the Ephe-

sians may understand these things in their hearts. And then he concludes thus—

And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

That is, I pray, that when ye shall stand fast in faith, and shall have this four-fold knowledge, ye may moreover know the love of Christ which we ought to understand: namely, that love which he hath toward us, and which we shew forth toward our neighbour; which knowledge, exceeds even the knowledge of the Gospel. For whatsoever thou mayest know of that, such knowledge will never live, or at least but a very short time, where love is wanting. The sum therefore of the prayer is this:—that we may increase in faith, that it may be strong and effectual, and that our love may be warm and fervent. Then shall we be “filled with all the fulness of God;” which, being a Hebrew form of speech, signifies, that we may be filled in that way and manner in which he fills; that we may be anointed with all his gifts and grace, and be so endued with his Spirit as to be rendered courageous, and to be illumined with his light; that his life may live in us, that his happiness may make us happy, and his love kindle love in us. And, in a word, that whatever he is, and is able to do, may be abundantly upon us, and work powerfully in us; that we may wholly put on God; and (so to speak) that we may be built up with God; not having certain small pieces or grains of him, but a full barn. A great deal has been written concerning this—how a man may become a partaker of the divine nature. And for this cause, they have formed out a certain ladder by which a man may ascend into heaven; together with many other vain figments of the same kind; but this is all patching a piece here and a piece there. Here, the right and nearest way to attain unto this, is laid down,—to get filled with all the fulness of God; that no one particle may be wanting unto thee, but that thou mayest have all things brought together into one; that, what-

ever thou speakest, thinkest, or doest, and, to embrace the whole in one word, that thy whole life may be a certain divinity !

But however, let no one think that any man can attain unto this in the present life. It is engrafted in us to desire and pray for these things, as Paul here did, but thou wilt find no one who is perfectly filled with such a fulness as this. All that I do here, is to shew and to teach, that these things are to be sought after with earnest covetings and groanings. For as long as we live here in the flesh, we are besprinkled with all the fulness of Adam. Wherefore, we have need to pray continually, that God would do away with our infirmity, and put into our hearts the might of his Holy Spirit; that he would fill us with all grace and power, and reign and work in us himself alone. This is a prayer that we ought mutually to put up for each other. On which prayer, that it may be effectual, may God condescend to shine by his grace ! Amen !

S E R M O N VII.

CONCERNING THE TEN LEPERS.

LUKE xvii.

And it came to pass as Jesus went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw

that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.

Luke, in distinction from the other Evangelists, generally records, not only the acts of Christ and his doctrines, like the rest, but also the directions in which he travelled and journeyed. For we may observe in his Gospel, up to the 13th chapter, that Christ commenced his preaching and course of miracles at Capernaum: to which place he had betaken himself from Nazareth: and he tarried there so generally, that that city began to be called under the Gospel, his city. Out of that city he used to go forth into all the surrounding cities and villages, to preach and shew forth signs. And after he had shewn forth these, and had every where preached the word, he entered upon his journey towards Jerusalem: which journey, containing many sermons here and there, and many instances of divine power exhibited by Christ, Luke describes from his thirteenth chapter to the end. For this was the last of his travellings, and performed during the last year of his life, of which the Evangelist here makes mention: saying, that Jesus, “as he went to Jerusalem, passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.” Which is the same as if he had said, He performed this miracle as he was going to Jerusalem.

He did not, therefore, go directly to Jerusalem from Capernaum, for Galilee is to the north of Jerusalem; and Samaria is near Galilee on the east; and Capernaum is situate in the very middle of Galilee. Moreover, the Evangelist has studiously left upon record this circuitous journey, in mentioning by name Samaria and Galilee, and especially, in saying that he passed “through the midst,” and did not take any short ways. This journeying of Christ, therefore, from the city of

Capernaum, was to the east toward Jordan, and into Samaria; and again, toward the west into Galilee; and then from Galilee toward the south to Jerusalem. A long journey, indeed, and in a very circuitous direction, and which must have required much time. Nor did he undertake this tedious travelling on his own account, but that he might thereby preach unto many, and be a help unto them. And with this intent he passed through many nations; that he might walk about in public and be within the reach of all, that they might come unto him, hear him, and be healed by him. For to that end he was sent, that he might be open unto all, and that all might freely and gratuitously partake of his benefits and grace.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

Here, perhaps, some one may be curious enough to ask of the evangelist, how these lepers, standing afar off, could lift up their voices, when those who are under this disease, generally have a hoarseness upon them, and for that reason use a kind of wooden clappers instead of their voice? Such an one may receive for answer, that these lepers were not a mile from Christ, but a little farther off than those who immediately followed him. Nor were all the lepers so far deprived of their voice, but that they could be heard, although they were at some distance. But the Evangelist, according to the manner of the scriptures, would by this shew the greatness of what they felt; which made them raise the cry of the heart, and forced them to make as much noise with their mouths as they possibly could. The whole of this history is most plain to be understood, and does not require any laboured interpretation. And, indeed, as its explication is simple and obvious, so the matter which it contains is of the greatest importance. For in the case of these lepers, it sets forth to us faith, and exhibits, in Christ, a display of love.

Now these two things, to believe and to love, make up the whole sum of Christianity: and this is what I inculcate again and again. Faith receives, love gives forth again. Faith leads man to God, love allures him unto men. By faith he passively submits himself to be crowned with benefits from God, and by love he bestows those benefits again on men. For, whosoever believeth, obtaineth all things from God, and is rich and happy. And therefore, he wants nothing himself, and he lays out his whole life, and whatever he does, to the benefit and profit of his neighbour; on whom, through love, he bestows his benefits as he himself has received them from God by faith. And thus, by faith he receives blessings from above of God; and below, he bestows them on his neighbour through love. But, on the contrary, the justiciaries, by their merits and good works, fight against this way of life, living to themselves only, and labouring at good works without faith. These two things therefore as it were of Christianity, faith and love, as set forth in the lepers and in Christ, let us now consider more particularly.

FIRST, then, the nature of faith is, to have a firm reliance on the grace of God, not to have any doubt of his good-will being inclined towards us, and to believe stedfastly, without any hesitation, that he has a care upon him to be a help for us under all our necessities. Now, where there is no such a reliance, and no such a persuasion concerning God, there can be no true faith; and then the prayers must of necessity be cold, neither can there be any true affection going out to God. On the other hand, where this reliance and persuasion are, they render the man animated and courageous; so that he is emboldened by this sensible reliance to lay his calamity before God, and implore his help.

Wherefore, it is not enough to believe the existence of God, and to weary his ears with long prayers, (which abuse of things has now most perniciously prevailed among Christians.) Rather, look at these lepers, and contemplate the display of faith in them!—how it teaches, without the help of any master, to pray success-

fully. See what a steady faith in Christ, and what sure persuasion of his accessibleness they had, not at all dreading any repulse from him! Their minds being buoyed up and confirmed by these hopes, they were emboldened to call upon Christ, and to lay their misery before him, entreating with an earnest cry a release from their disease. For, had they not first conceived these feelings toward him, they would have remained in their house, and would not have run after him with so much concern, nor have lifted up their voices to cry unto him. Nay, this scruple would have arisen in their minds.—What are we going to do? Who knows that he will take it well at our hands, if we pray unto him? Perhaps he will disdain us! A fluctuating and wavering faith of this kind prays with fear and trembling, and does not lift up its voice, nor run willingly towards God. It mutters, indeed, many words, and makes all things sound again with a great noise, but it rather wants a thing with great pride than humbly prays for it, and it would be first sure whether or not it should be heard, which is no less than tempting God. But true faith in the merciful and good will of God, does not distrust; and for that reason, the prayer is powerful and effectual, as the faith is itself. Nor is it in vain that Luke notices these three particulars concerning the lepers;—first, that they “met him:” secondly, that they “stood:” and thirdly, that they “lifted up their voices.” In these three things their faith is displayed, and an example is afforded for us to follow.

This *meeting* signifies a courage, which, through a sure confidence in Christ, emboldened them to meet him. And their *standing* signifies an immovable and fixed mind, not having any scruples in itself. Their *earnest cry* shews that fervency in prayer which arises out of such a confidence. Whereas, on the other hand, a mean doubting, neither goes straight forward, nor fixes itself still, nor lifts up its voice, but is carried about here and there, and miserably tormented; its countenance is cast down, and its hand under its head; now and then it opens its mouth, and then mutters,—‘Who knows,’—

‘ Who can tell,’—‘ If it were but certain,’—‘ Suppose all this hope should end in nought,’—and other mutterings of the same kind, betokening despair. It has no good persuasion concerning God: it cannot bring up the mind to a certain expectation of any thing from him: therefore, it is but just that it should receive nothing: according to that of James, ‘ He that setteth himself to ask any thing of God, let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that prayeth wavering, let him not think that he shall obtain any thing of God,’ &c. It was thus with the foolish virgins. They came with their oil out, and their lamps empty; that is, stuffed up with their own works, and knocked at the door with great fury, hoping to be admitted, but no one opened unto them.

Behold this persuasion concerning God, and this confidence of obtaining every good, being conceived in an enlarged and free mind, is what the scripture calls the Christian faith, and “ a good conscience:” unto which, every one that shall be saved, must attain. But at this no one can arrive by mere works and doctrines, as we shall make it plainly appear in this exposition. For, unless thou have the mind above-mentioned, thou canst do no good works at all. Take heed therefore that thou be not deceived. Many men that have a plenty of words, have taken upon themselves to teach concerning faith and a good conscience, having themselves no more experience therein than a common post, but persuading themselves, that the whole is nothing more than a certain knowledge lying coldly asleep in the soul; and that it is enough if the heart believe, that that God exists, about whom it hears. But you may see, in the present case, what a lively and powerful thing faith is; seeing that, it brings the heart of man, and so the whole man, into that sensible experience, that he though hope expects from God every good. And hence it constrains to a going forward, to a standing fast, and causes the lifting up of the voice: and, resting in the goodness of God, it prays without wavering for the removing away of every evil.

The **SECOND** property of faith is, that it does not first want to inquire whether it may be sure and certain that God has condescended to receive it into his grace, and whether or not he will hear it when it prays, as these wavering ones do who tempt God, and want to take hold of him with their hands as a blind man takes hold of a wall; for it is thus that these lay hold of God, and want to hold him safe in their hands lest he should slip away from them. But Paul saith, Heb. xi. that "faith is the evidence of things not seen;"—that is, faith rests in those things which cannot be beheld nor laid hold of by any sense of the body or soul, stands in that persuasion which it has conceived concerning God, and commits itself wholly unto it; nothing doubting, that it shall obtain its hope, and be most assuredly brought to the enjoyment of it. And this sensible persuasion comes upon the man, without his first seeking it, or expecting any such thing, and is effected by this faith and confidence.

I pray you—who sent any letter signed and sealed to these lepers to assure them that Christ would hear them? And when this sensible persuasion of his grace came upon them, who, interposing his faith, commanded them to have a good hope and not to doubt at all of his goodness? There were none of these things whatever. There was nothing but their own encouraged mind, freely yielding itself up to the goodness of Christ: of which, however, they neither had a sense, a taste, nor an experience. Nay, they had no traces whatever whereby they could feel out what he would do with them. They fixed their eyes solely and only on his goodness: which had given birth to such confidence in them, that they did not doubt but they should have the enjoyment of the benefits of Christ. Whence then did they get their knowledge of his goodness? (For they must have had some kind of previous knowledge of it, how far soever they might be from the experience and feeling sense of it.) No doubt, from the great fame that was every where spread abroad concerning him. They had heard how ready he was to bestow his benefits on all, even on

men of the vilest description. This it was that allured them on, although they themselves had had, as yet, no feeling sense of it themselves. For the good-will and inclination of God toward us must first be proclaimed to us by the Word: on which, afterwards, without any previous knowledge or experience of it, we are to be built up: as will be shewn in what follows.

The THIRD property of faith then, is, that it holds out in its hand nothing of merit, nor attempts to purchase the grace of God by I know not what works; as those wavering ones, and the pharisees always do. Nay it offers nothing but its sins and imperfections; cleaving to the goodness of God only, and committing itself unto it. For faith will suffer no works or merits to be near it. Because, it so wholly presents itself before the mercy of God, and has so great a desire and so craving an affection after him, and so poises itself upon that affection, and, as it were, mounts upward like an eagle; that all its own works and merits, in comparison of that goodness of God which it so loves and admires, are accounted nothing, and, compared with that, mere sins. Hence it acknowledges itself to be devoid of all merit, and more deserving the wrath of God than his grace; and that, without any hypocrisy and mere pretence; for when it descends deeply into itself, it sees nothing whole!

Of this, these lepers here shew forth a striking example; who, without any merit to stuff them up, conceive a firm hope in Christ of having their health restored. With what duties could they have gained him over, when they had never so much as looked upon him with their eyes, much less had done him any services. Moreover, they were rendered loathsome by the leprosy: so that, according to the law, he might justly have abhorred their approach to him, and have refused to have any intercourse with them. And therefore, if you look at their real case, every opportunity of getting near Christ, when they had never benefited him by the value of a straw, and when their dreadfully contagious disease had prevented them from all right of communicating with him, was to them precious. Hence it was, that they

stood afar off, and considered themselves unworthy of the benefits of Christ.—And in the same way also, faith stands afar off from God; and yet, nevertheless goes to meet him, and lifts up its voice for his help; for it well knows, how undeserving it is of his divine benefits; nor has it any thing to rest in, but the great goodness of God which it hears every where spoken of. For it is that soul that seeks God, which stands afar off and acknowledges itself to be destitute: because, the goodness of God can endure none of our merits near it, and will have all its operations come free: even as Christ comes into this place to the lepers, that his glory may be whole, and unmingled with any thing else. And here, behold, there is a beautiful harmony.—The goodness of God bestows its benefits freely, and will have nothing to be paid for them. So, responsively, faith also, as she receives these benefits freely, wants not to pay any thing back unto him from whom she receives them. Thus, ‘The rich and the poor are sweetly agreed,’ according to the voice of the Psalmist.’

This also the words of the lepers testify: for they cry thus unto him, “have mercy on us.” He who desires to have mercy shewn him, does not want a purchase or exchange of any thing: he seeks grace only and mercy: of which, he confesses himself unworthy, and deserving far the contrary. Behold, therefore, what a beautiful, true, lively, and appropriate representation of Christian faith this is: abundantly shewing us, what we are to do if we desire to be in the right way to find grace, and to aspire unto felicity. But, in addition to this doctrine wherein we have been taught to believe, there follows the allurements of faith; that is, that whereby we are drawn out to believe readily. And this allurements of faith stands in this:—our considering, how impossible it is that faith thus acted should deceive us: and how certain it may be that it is heard, and will undoubtedly receive that concerning which it believes. For the Evangelist Luke shews, with what willingness and favourable inclination Christ heard them.—He looked upon them and said as follows:

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves to the priests.

How graciously and sweetly does the Lord invite the hearts of all unto him, and in that way allure them to believe in him ! Nor are we to call it into doubt, that he would do unto all as he did unto these lepers, if we would but commit ourselves unto his goodness and grace with a willing mind, which is the duty of a Christian heart ; an example of which, is here given us in these lepers. And how well-pleasing it is unto God, for any one to rest in his goodness with a willing mind and in safety, even before he has had any experience or taste of it, is more than abundantly testified in this place ; seeing that, he hears them so promptly and without any delay ; and makes no foregoing promise to them, that he will do it, but treats them as though it were already done, and as though he had already performed for them what they desired. For, he does not say, ‘ I will have mercy upon you : be ye clean.’ But, without any previously introductory words, he says to them, “ Go, shew yourselves to the priests.” As though he would say, There is no need of prayers : your faith, before ever ye began to pray, obtained that for you. As soon as ever ye applied your minds to hope any such thing of me, ye were clean in my sight ! Ye have need of no one thing else but to go and shew your cleanness to the priests. Such as I account you to be, and such as ye believe ye are,—such ye are,—and such ye shall be ! For he would not have sent them to the priests, if he had not accounted them to be pure, or designed to make them pure immediately.

Behold, so powerful a thing is faith to obtain any thing from God, that, with him, the thing is considered as done before ever it is prayed for. Concerning which it was said of old, Isaiah lxxv. “ And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.” Not, however, that our faith is, or we are, worthy of this, but rather he holds out his unspeakable goodness and willing grace, and thereby allures us to believe in him, and, with safety of mind, to

place in him our hope of every thing that is good; that is, with a conscience joyful and unwavering; which wants not to take hold of God with the hand, nor to tempt him. And this you see here accomplished in these lepers; whom, before they call, he hears; and is ready, before they have finished their prayer, to do for them what they desired in their hearts. “Go,” saith he. I promise you nothing. The matter is accomplished beyond the need of promises. Take what ye have prayed for, and go your way.’ And are not these powerful allurements which might render the heart happy and confident? Behold here, at length, his grace is sensibly felt, and allows itself to be touched; or rather, he touches and lays hold of us.

But here we have set before us another view of the Christian life. The lepers taught us to believe: but here, Christ commends unto us love. Moreover, love ever so carries itself towards its neighbour, as it sees Christ carry himself toward it; as he himself saith, John xiii. “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” And, “By this shall all men know whether ye be my disciples, if ye have love one toward another.” Again, “My commandment unto you is, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” And what, I pray, is this, but as if he had said, Ye have now in me, by faith, all that I am, and all that I possess. I am all yours. Ye are now, in me, rich and full unto satisfaction. For whatever I do or love, I do and love for your sakes, not for my own; considering nothing else but how I may benefit you, and accomplish those things that may administer to your need and necessity. Wherefore, it becomes you to weigh well the example which I have given you, that each of you also may do unto the other, as he knows that I have done unto him, and may apply himself unto this one thing;—that all his life and labour may be directed to the profit of his neighbour. My love and goodness is an overflowing treasure to your faith; and therefore, in return, it is right that your love should be an abundant supply to your neighbours. For this is the sum of the Christian life brought into a small com-

pass ; so that there is no need of much teaching and many books to set it forth. In these two particulars are briefly comprehended all those things which are required unto Christianity : concerning which Paul thus speaks, Gal. vi. “ Bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” And again, Philip. ii. ‘ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus : who, although he was God, yet became our servant, and obedient even unto death,’ &c.

This Christian, kind, and happy life, greatly galls the devil. Nor does he suffer loss by it in any thing so much, as in his human doctrines : as we shall presently hear.

Most certainly the Christian man’s life is set forth to him thus in a few words.—That he have his heart rightly set towards God, and a will inclined to serve his neighbour ; this is the sum of Christianity. A right heart and faith, teach, of their own accord, how a man ought to pray. And, what is a faith of this sort, but a kind of perpetual prayer ? For it continually sets its hope in the divine favour : and, if it hope in that, then it seeks after it with all its heart : and to seek after this one thing, is that true and real prayer which Christ enjoins us, which God requires, and which obtains and can do all things : — and for this very reason : because it looks neither to itself, its works, or its worthiness, but to the goodness of God only : to which alone it commits itself, and lays hold of it as its only consolation. Hence, what such prayer asks for, it has at once ; because, it springs from faith and an undoubting confidence in God. So, the holy prophet Zechariah, chap. x. rightly calls the Spirit, “ the Spirit of grace and of supplications.” For God there saith, “ I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of favour and of prayers.” Which signifies, that faith knows the grace of God, and, without ceasing, breathes after it !

And again, charity teaches him, in what way he should apply himself spontaneously unto good works.

For those works only deserve to be called good, which serve our neighbour and bring profit unto him. For what else is a love of this sort, but a continual doing of good works to the benefit of our neighbour? And hence it has obtained the name "work of love," in the same way as the former has been called 'the faith of prayer:' as John xv. saith, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." As though he had said, I have so directed all my works to your profit, that I have even laid down my life for you, which is the greatest of all love: that is, it is the greatest work and proof of love. And if greater works of love had been necessary, I would have been ready to perform them also for your sakes. It will therefore become you, after my example, to love one another and to do good one to another. Beyond this, I require nothing to be done by you. I do not ask you to build temples unto me, to take long journies into foreign lands to salute certain saints, to starve yourselves with fasting, to sing a great deal, to follow monkery or any singular kind of life: but it is in this you will obey me, and in this you will gain my favour;—when each in duty serves the other; not for any private advantage, but with a view to the benefit of his neighbour. It is in this the whole matter stands.

But when Christ here says "friends," we are not by that to understand that he will not have enemies to be loved also: for the words plainly say, who layeth down his life for "*his* friends." "His friends" embraces more than if he had said "friends" only. For it may be, that thou mightest be a friend toward me, but I may not have a friendly inclination toward thee: that is, I may love thee, account thee as a friend, and do good unto thee, while thou, at the same time, hatest me and shewest enmity against me: even as Christ accosted Judas in the garden, thus, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" He treated Judas as a friend, but Judas did not treat him as a friend: for Judas accounted him an enemy and hated him. On the other hand, Christ re-

garded Judas and acknowledged him as a friend.—Love must always be round, and be kind towards all men alike.

This is how the apostle James, in his Epistle, chap. ii. will have it: where he says, “Faith without works is dead. For as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Faith cannot be in a man and work nothing; that is impossible. For faith is a living thing, and a thing impatient of sloth. Let, therefore, men not deceive themselves, supposing that they have faith, when they have no one particle of it. Wherefore, they ought to look into their works:—whether they love their neighbour, and assist him in kind offices. For if it be otherwise, they have nothing but a certain rashly-conceived notion of faith by hearing. And it happens unto them, as unto him who has beheld his natural face in a glass; as soon as he goes away from it, he sees himself no longer; and from the intervention of other things, he forgets the image which the surface of the glass reflected; concerning which, the same apostle James has also spoken, chap. i.

These words of the apostle James, seducers and blind leaders have so extensively exemplified, that they have wholly extinguished faith, and, in the room of it, have erected works only; as though righteousness and salvation proceeded not of faith, but of works. Moreover, to this darkness, thick to an awful degree, they have added that which is thicker still. They have taught and inculcated those good works only, which bring no benefit whatever to our neighbour.—Such as fasting; dunning the ears of God with a babbling of long prayers; keeping holy-days; not eating flesh, butter, or milk; building churches, colleges for monks, and altars; appointing masses, vigils, and stated hours, (as they call them); clothing themselves in grey, white, or black garments; joining themselves to a certain ecclesiastical order; and a thousand other things of the same kind, which are of no benefit to any one mortal whatever, and which God himself condemns.

And therefore the meaning of James is this;—that, since the life of a Christian is nothing but faith and

love, and love nothing but benefiting and doing good unto all men, both friends and enemies ; so, where true faith is, love will certainly accompany it ; which so does through love unto others, as Christ does unto it through faith. Let each one take heed, therefore, that he deceive not himself, and foster in his heart a dream or a fictitious faith for true faith : of which latter, he can have no evidence more satisfactory, than works of love. By which sign, Christ will have his disciples distinguished from the rest of the world : for he saith, “ By this shall all men know whether ye be my disciples, if ye love one another.”

And hence the apostle James in the same manner saith, Look into thyself. If thy life be not so directed as to be to the benefit of others ; and thou livest to thyself only, wholly regardless of the necessity of thy neighbour ; it is certain that thy faith is of nothing worth and unprofitable. For it does not shew forth itself towards others, as it has found Christ to be towards itself : and therefore, does not believe that it has received benefits from Christ : for if it believed that, it would not consult its own profit, but would lay itself out to benefit its neighbour in return.

To the same point also speaks the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. “ If I have faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Which also is thus to be understood.—Not that faith is not sufficient unto the attainment of salvation, but that Christianity ought to unite faith and charity in an indissoluble bond, and by no means to suffer these sister graces to be sundered ; for the nature of them is, that they should be joined together, and never separated. And although some rash ones desire to separate them, wishing to believe only and not to love also, despising their neighbours, and yet, nevertheless, passing themselves off for Christians, which is a false persuasion rushing to destruction ; so I also say, that all things are placed in faith, and that it alone saves us, so that a man hath no need of any thing else unto salvation. And yet, it is not on that account slothful, but employed in various works,

not for its own profit (for it suffers not under the want of any thing, having all things in Christ,) but for the profit of its neighbour; for whose benefit it is prepared to undergo any thing.—If faith be not attended with these things, it is without doubt false and feigned. For such a working as this, is the test of its love.

But those blind leaders allow themselves so to teach works, and to urge them, as though they were necessary unto the salvation of him that does them: which is an utter perversion and the greatest of all errors: for by this preposterous doctrine, they destroy both faith and love, on which the nature and sum of all Christianity depend. These transfer works from the neighbour to the person himself who does them, as though he could not be saved without them. And where this most false opinion reigns, faith must leave its place; for that holds, that its works are not profitable and necessary to itself, but to its neighbour. These two things, therefore, differ most widely from each other. Faith rejects works from itself, and assigns them to its neighbour, and that through love. But these blind guides pluck them away from the neighbour, and assign them to him that does them: thus totally destroying both faith and love. For in this way, they make men “lovers of their own selves,” and busy about their own salvation only, trusting to their own works: upon which, afterwards, follow evil and weak consciences, which seek out for themselves many singular and particular works: such as building of churches, prayers without end, enduring hunger to gain the favour of some saints, and other things of the same kind tending to the benefit of no creature whatever. In a word, there is no evil that must not of necessity flow from hence. Even as in our time, these evils among the herds of monks, the colleges, and the academies, are manifest before the eyes of every one.

Let us then now consider the works of love in Christ, as set before us in this example. What will you find in Christ that does not breathe mere love? All can see this for themselves.

FIRST, what necessity was there for him to journey

through the midst of Samaria and Galilee? Or who repaid him any thing for that journey? In a word, who entreated him to do this? Is it not manifest that he underwent all these things of mere grace, freely and willingly? He received nothing for all this wearying of himself. He came of his own accord, no one even asking any such thing of him: that no one might say, that this was done on account of his merits, or that he obtained it of him by his prayers. Here then we plainly see, that he did nothing on his own account, or consulting his own profit, but did every thing for the benefit of others; not being asked by any one, but altogether freely, nothing moving him but goodness and love. And so again, as to his coming into this village, as it were by appointment,—what need had he so to do, I pray you? Who entreated him to come there? Who repaid him any thing for doing it? Is it not true that he came previous to any merit and any prayers, and offered his love and benefits willingly and of mere grace, and not to seek his own profit, but only to serve others, that he might invite the hearts of all to believe on him? Behold! this is the property and virtue of love;—it knows nothing but to do good; it lives the life it lives, unto the benefit of others, having no view to private advantage; it does all things freely and without any regard to the merit of others; it anticipates all things with its benefits. Behold! it is on such a manner of life and on such works, that thou art to fix thine eyes, and to form thy life after the same patterns, if thou wouldst be called a Christian; and to remove all works from thy sight which are not after this standard, even if they be so great as even to “remove mountains,” as the apostle saith.

SECONDLY: Behold how he bestows his benefits without any loss to others, and thus guards against any injury to others. For some so shew kindness to one as to injure another. ‘Offering (according to the trite proverb) my mistress money with one hand, and stealing her horse with the other.’ Of which set are those who give alms of that which they have obtained by un-

righteousness: concerning whom Isaiah saith, chap. lxi. "I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering." Of this stamp are nearly all the colleges and monkeries in our day; who consume with sumptuous luxury the labour and sweat of men, and then afterwards, instead thereof, return unto God masses, vigils, and rosaries, (as they call them;) or appoint an anniversary; and, sometimes, give alms. But all these things are done out of the property of others; on which they live, and with which they worship God; passing their lives all the while in the greatest luxury, affluence, wealth, and abundance of all things. This, however, is a destructive kind of benevolence, and a widely-spreading calamity.

But Christ here does an injury to no one: nay, he takes especial care that none shall suffer loss. For he sends the lepers unto the priests, that nothing should be diminished from their right. And he is so bountiful unto these lepers, as if he came into the village purposely on their account. He looks on them with a merciful eye, and gives them his help with a ready and willing mind. And moreover, he takes care that the priests shall lose nothing. Although he might have set aside that, seeing that, he had cleansed them quite out of the natural way, without the help of the priests, and might therefore have wholly disregarded them; and have said, What have you to do with these lepers, on whom you have not performed your office according to the law? You have no right to expect any remuneration from them. They owe you nothing.—But charity does not contend, nor strive; it is only careful about how it can do good: and therefore, it undertakes more than it has need to do, and does more than is required of it. And hence, the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. vi. saith, it is wrong that there should be any contentions among Christians. For charity does not strive for its right, nor exact it, but rather disregards it. It is only careful how it may bestow benefits: and therefore Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. saith rightly, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am be-

come as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal," and nothing else.

Our learned ones, indeed, are such, that they teach many things rightly, which, nevertheless, have nothing whatever in them that savours of Christianity: and which are diametrically opposite to charity. I am not here speaking of those who sit at the civil tribunal and administer justice: for since justice has more weight with some ungodly men than charity, judges must be appointed, who may put an end to strife, lest any thing worse proceed therefrom. Nevertheless, to punish thieves on the cross, and break the limbs of murderers on the wheel, is not Christianity, but done to prevent outrages, and is also necessary to be done. So also to eat and drink is not Christianity; yet, nevertheless, necessity requires those things. But, although these works are necessary, yet Christianity does not consist in them: and therefore, let us not be content with those things, as though, by them, we can become Christians. Even those things which concern the marriage chamber are not Christianity; yet, nevertheless, marriage is necessary, that worse things be not done. And the same we may say of all such things.

THIRDLY: He gives a still more convincing proof of the nature of charity; seeing that, he exercises it toward those, on whom what benefit soever you may bestow, is lost; and from whom, if you do them a kindness, you meet with nothing but evil in return.—He cleanses the ten lepers: of whom one only, mindful of his duty, returned to give thanks: on the other nine, the benefit was lost. If therefore he had wished, after the manner of men, and in the way of human nature, to act according to right, and not according to the law of charity, he would have permitted those nine to be infected with the leprosy again. But he allows them to go their way and enjoy his love and benefit, although, for his grace, they return him ingratitude and hatred. Moreover, he took nothing from the priests: to whom he allows their honour and right to be given, although, in the present case, it was not due to them. But they also

prove ungrateful : for they turn away the lepers from him, persuading them that they were not cleansed by Christ, but by the sacrifice, and because they had obeyed the law : and thus, they corrupt the faith of the lepers, and make Christ vile in their esteem, as one who invaded the rights of others, and, with them, puffed off himself.

For that the priests alienated the lepers from Christ, and shook off their faith in him, may easily be believed, and the context proves it. And therefore, it must be, that they instilled into the minds of these lepers some horrid things concerning Christ, and, on the other hand, extolled works and sacrifices in the highest degree : whereby, they destroyed the excellent and fair faith that was in them, and enthroned themselves in their hearts in the room of Christ. The lepers too suffered themselves to be persuaded to conceive such an opinion concerning Christ, as the impudent priests, by falsely traducing him, had insinuated : so that they persecuted him with the utmost hatred, and maintained that their cleansing, which they received from God, was obtained by sacrifices and their own merits : and did not ascribe it, as they ought, to Christ and his mere goodness. And thus, being liberated from the corporal, they fell into the spiritual leprosy, which is a thousand-fold more pestilential than the former. But Christ patiently allows both to go away and enjoy his benefits. He waves his own right, and mildly suffers hatred and ingratitude to be returned him for praise and gratitude. From which any one may easily learn, that we sometimes obtain that from God by prayer, which, it had been better for us had it been denied us. How much better would it have been for those lepers to have passed the short span of life in their uncleanness, than, having had their bodies cleansed, to fall into a spiritual, and that by far the most foul, leprosy !

On this example of Christ thou art to fix thine eye, as on a certain standard, and to form thy life according to it :—that thou not only do good works without injury to any one, and without any view to private advantage,

and do not confine thy benefits to friends and deserving men ; but, that thou be persuaded in thyself, that, for the most part, thou wilt have to bestow benefits on those who will not acknowledge the kindnesses they have received, and that, in return for them, thou wilt receive the greatest ingratitude and hatred. If thou shew thy kindness in this manner to others, then thou wilt tread in the footsteps, and be conformed to the life of, thy Lord, Christ. And unless thou come up to this, take heed that thou consider not thyself to be a perfect and true Christian. Nor do thou value it a straw that thou wearest a garment of rough horse-hair, or fastest every day, or sayest mass, or mutterest over the psalter, or goest on pilgrimages to the saints, or consecratest churches and idle anniversaries. For if these things of nought had been of any value whatever, Christ would by no means have set them aside.

By this time, I hope you see, to what all the works of Christ tend. Wherefore, examine thy life with all diligence, and search it thoroughly; and if thou canst perceive in it any work wherein thou pleasest thyself, and whereby thou hopest to promote thy salvation, tread that work under thy feet, and shun it as thou wouldst all the devils in hell; nor rest until thou hast extricated thyself from that ungodly persuasion. And strive after this one thing,—that thy life be necessarily devoted, useful, and subservient, not to thyself, but to thy neighbour. Cursed be he that liveth and serveth himself only, when Christ would not do his own will and live for himself. And most certain it is, that such private works as these, will lead thee away from the path of faith and love, and cast thee down headlong. There is no other work remaining for thee to do, as necessary unto the attainment of salvation, besides this one,—that thou believe, and ever exercise thy faith by love, and stand therein immovable; not suffering thyself to be moved away by priests, as they plucked away these nine: for they have alluring tongues, and, by their outward show, easily impose upon the unwary. All other works scatter thou forth upon the promiscuous multitude of men, not

at all regarding, whether they be received with a grateful or an ungrateful mind : thou art not to trouble thyself about that. Do thou lay fast hold of faith, which freely giveth unto thee Christ ; in whom thou art blessed with an abundance of all things. And then, continue thou in love, which giveth thee unto thy neighbour, and bringeth such an abundance of good works, that thou alone art not able to do them. Whatsoever thou mayest add to these two things is of no moment whatever, even though the works of all the saints were thine.

Hear what the apostle Paul saith, 1 Cor. xiii. ‘ Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.’ It is not enough to supply the necessity of the poor, and to afflict thyself ; to thine enemy also thou art to shew thy love ; and thou art to expose thyself and thy goods to be spoiled. Thou art not to select persons to whom, in preference to others, thou mayest be bountiful. Charity requires of thee to be the same to all, without difference.

But here some one may say, What then is to become of the spiritual (as they are called,) that is the mass-priests, the monks, and nuns ? for they benefit no man whatever, and only do works unto their own profit.— I answer : What hast thou to do with the monks and nuns ? Christ has not commanded thee to imitate that scum of mankind, but commands thee to follow him. If they do not their works according to the above-mentioned principle, that is, to alleviate by them the necessities of others, and do not cleave unto faith ; doubt thou not that they are against Christ, and that like the foolish virgins, they are going on with empty and darkened lamps ; and no other Christ will come on their account. Concerning such as these, there is recorded a prophecy of Peter, 2d Epist. ii. “ There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies : ” that is, spiritual orders and ranks, which shall only be the destruction of souls. And Paul also, 2 Thess. ii. “ And for this cause (because they received not the love of the truth) God shall send

them strong delusion that they should believe a lie;— who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In these words are foretold, by the spirit of prophecy, of what nature the institutions of ecclesiastics are, and whence they have proceeded. For they wish to appear to shine in godliness above all Christians, when they are at the same time the farthest of all from it. So that it requires more labour to be spent upon them to bring them to the true way of Christianity, than upon any other order of men.

The order of married persons and of magistrates, is instituted upon principles of equality. For here the wife, the children, &c. are in subjection, and continually afford opportunity for the exercise of mutual love; ever shewing, that thou art not to love and work for thyself; whether thou wilt or not, here thou must serve others. And if thou have a knowledge of faith, and rightly form thy life according to it, thou wilt find, that there is no room left thee for private works, for such a multiplicity of works for others will surround thee, that thou wilt soon be brought to forget all private works. For if thou be tried with hunger, if thou weary thyself out with thy daily occupations, if thou eat, drink, sleep, or marry a wife; in a word, what toil soever, thou undergoest to support thy body, and to keep thyself from poverty; all this is to the end that thou mayest be able to live in the world, and to satisfy thy belly that craveth and is impatient of hunger; all which together thou doest, to the intent only that thou mightest be serviceable to others. Behold, this is the true and proper nature of the Christian life. Hence the apostle Paul, Rom. xiii. saith, “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another;” and let the one serve the other in love.

From these things you may easily understand, that the world is now full of spiritual orders; (that is, of infernal gulphs and pit-falls of robbers) and yet, that the true Christian life is every where set aside: so far is it from possibility that you can any where find an example of it. And all these calamities we owe to the Pope

and his execrable decrees, whom the wrath of God has thus set over us as a guide and a teacher; which the apostles Paul and Peter, many ages before, foretold would come to pass. Let this suffice concerning the first part of this Gospel: now let us direct our minds to the other part.

And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.

Hitherto we have learnt the work of faith, and what its nature is: whence we gather, what its beginning is, what accompanies it, and how well-pleasing it is unto God. And all these things have been said, concerning the first rudiments, and the commencement of Christianity. Now, it is not enough to enter upon any thing, unless we afterwards advance as well as begin at first, and fully accomplish our purpose. For Christ saith, Matt. xxiv. "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." And again, Luke ix. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Wherefore, this other part instructs us concerning the increase and perfection of faith.

Faith, or the trust of the heart in God, is a very tender thing, and cannot endure much: it is very soon hurt, so as to be put out of place and to totter, unless it be duly exercised and practised. For many things come in its way, which run up against it, and bring it into peril. It is often run against by sin, by nature, by reason, by self-opinion, by human doctrines, by the examples of our righteous ones, and by Satan; and, in a word, traps are laid for it both before and behind; there is no truce; it is continually in temptation; and, by threat and fear, is often enticed to go over to works. So that Peter justly saith, that "the righteous scarcely are saved." And the prophet Zechariah, compares the righteous man to "a brand plucked out of the fire," that it be not wholly burnt. And again, Amos compares him to the mangled remains of a sheep, which the shepherd has with difficulty rescued from the jaws of the wolf. Be-

hold, with such malice, and, as it were, such a troop of temptations, is the heart assailed that is endued with faith. Hence it is that Paul saith to the Corinthians, "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." And he continually admonishes us, that we walk in carefulness and in fear, and keep a diligent watch over our faith. For, as the same apostle saith, we bear about this precious treasure in an earthen vessel, which is easily broken if God take not care of us.

Let us not therefore be secure and careless, but live in the fear of God, praying with Jeremiah, that he would keep our faith, and never permit us to come to such a state of despair, as to doubt of his goodness, and approach him with dread as a destroying tyrant. This peril also the present Gospel clearly sets before us, in the awful example of the ten lepers; of whom nine departed from the faith, and one only stood fast and endured unto the end. It is often the same with these things, as with a fine tree, which, in the spring, shews forth such a quantity of buds, that it appears as if it would be unequal to the load of fruit: but afterwards, from the damages received by storms, so many of its blossoms are destroyed, so much of its young fruit is beaten off while growing, and so much of that which weathered the storms is eaten up by the canker worms, that scarcely a tenth part comes to ripe fruit.—So, you may find many, who receive the word with joy, and submit themselves unto faith. But as the Lord saith, the ground is either stony or dry: or, they are entangled with briars and thorns: that is, they suffer themselves to be turned aside by temptations and fleshly lusts: for as soon as matters turn out contrary to their desires, and God tries them by some affliction, immediately, forgetting all his goodness, they turn their eyes upon his divine wrath only, and then their faith is burnt up, their heart fears, their conscience falls and flees from God; so impossible is it for them to dare to meet God as they did before.

Here you see how Christ, as soon as these lepers began to believe in him and to have a good hope con-

cerning him, tried their faith, and pressed it to go forward. For he did not heal their disease, in a way in which they could see it and witness it. He only told them to go and shew themselves to the priests. Now, if they had been destitute of faith, reason and human nature alone would have immediately murmured and said thus,—‘What is the meaning of this? We promised to ourselves some great thing from him, and with a certain confidence we expected that we should receive some great benefit from him : but he does not according to his custom, and as he is wont to do unto others, touch our bodies with his hand : he only looks on us and does nothing else. Perhaps he rejects us. Moreover he neither assures us nor signifies that he will heal our disease : but he leaves us between hope and fear : only commanding us to go unto the priests. But what use is it for us to shew ourselves unto them, when they know beforehand, that we are diseased with the leprosy?’ Behold in this way nature would have grown indignant, and would have become wrath with him because he had not satisfied their desires with a word, nor given any sure promise of what he would do.

But here was faith, which went on gathering greater strength, and became stronger by the assault of temptations ; not at all damped by the hard and uncertain words of Christ, but fixing a firm hope in his goodness ; from which it suffered not itself to be moved by any powers. There was, truly, in these lepers a rich and remarkable faith : which may be collected from this : that, relying on the words of Christ, they went away with a willing and safely-trusting mind to the place where they were sent. For if they had hesitated, they certainly would not have obeyed the words of Christ ; and especially, as he gave them no certain promise.—In the same way does God treat all of us, whensoever it seemeth good unto him to prove and strengthen our faith. He so deals with us, that we know not in what state our affairs are, or what his will is concerning us. Which he does, that man may learn to commit himself wholly unto him, and to put himself into the hands of

his goodness, not doubting, that he shall receive from him what he asks for, or something better. And thus it was that the lepers bethought themselves.—‘ We will certainly go where he commands us to go, although he does not reveal unto us the intention of his mind, whether it be his good-will to heal us or not. But this shall raise no scruple in our minds, nor shall he on that account be the less esteemed by us: nay, on the contrary, we will have the more exalted thoughts of him: and we will promise to ourselves, with a willingly believing mind concerning his goodness, that, even if he does not cleanse us, he will do something for us better than cleansing the leper of our body: we will not therefore, on this account, lightly esteem his goodness.’

Behold, this is the way in which our faith ought to increase. Such temptation and trial as this, will follow us through the whole of our life: and therefore, our faith ought in the same proportion to increase. For, after God has tried us in one thing, and has so exercised us that it at last becomes clear to us what his will concerning us in that thing is; he then puts us into another temptation, and then into another. And thus, our faith and confidence are daily strengthened more and more, if we do but go forward with a courageous heart under every temptation that comes upon us. Behold, this is what the apostle Peter calls, 1 Epist. ii. growing in Christ, “ As new-born babes desire that milk, (not of the body but of the soul) which is sincere, that ye may grow thereby.” Again, 2 Pet. last chapter, “ Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And the apostle Paul every where almost desires, that we may increase, stand fast, and be filled with all fulness, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. Which is nothing else, but to be strengthened in faith, when God hides his goodness, and carries himself towards us as Christ carried himself towards these lepers, so that we see not at all how matters stand between him and us. For faith must be “ the evidence of things not seen; ” that is, a persuasion and embracing of those things which are

hidden from us, and perceptible by none of our senses.

Wherefore, be thou fully persuaded of this, that when God appears to be the farthest off, he is then, undoubtedly, the most near. The words of Christ are so spoken, that thou mayest not know what it is his mind to do. He neither promises nor yet refuses his help. So that the lepers, who before doubted not at all of his goodness, might have been offended, might have fallen into wavering thoughts upon it, and have interpreted the words of Christ in a sense far different from what he intended. But Christ spoke them from an abounding love; thinking, that there was no need of many promises, seeing that they had already obtained what they requested. Nevertheless, as the affection of Christ was hidden, they might have thought with themselves that he had changed his mind, and was farther from them in his affection than he was before. But this is always the way with all the works and the words of his transcendent goodness:—he always seems to us at first more merciful and more favourably inclined toward us, than he appears afterwards, when he is about to do something with us.

This was the case also with the people of Israel in the wilderness:—they thought that God had not brought them out of Egypt, when they had before called upon him in Egypt, and had believed that they were delivered by him! And all these things come upon us that we might not stay long in the first rudiments, and in a suckling faith, but might increase and grow up until we can drink strong wine unmingled, and are satiated with the Spirit unto the full; so that now, we may have it in our power to despise and overcome, not only honours and friends, but even death and hell. Hence, it is the case with these false ones who are destitute of faith, as with unsuccessful miners; they begin to dig and to search with a rich hope, but just as they are come to the treasure and have but a very little farther to dig, they leave the mine, considering within themselves how much labour and pains they have spent in vain. Then another

worthy of that treasure comes, who never yet began to dig: he strikes in his pick-axe with all his might, and finds that which was before in vain sought and dug for by the labour of others.

The grace of God is such, that when one begins to believe, and does not give all diligence to gain daily more increase and strength, that grace is taken from him and given to one who never began: and if he be a slothful one also, it is transferred from him to another. It is a living faith alone that God requires. But here our academies, (such is their blindness,) most stupidly and poisonously speak thus of faith: teaching, that it is sufficient unto salvation if any one have the beginning of it, or any particle of it:—but, “It came to pass that *as they went* they were cleansed.”

The meaning of these words is, that it is impossible for faith to be deceived; and that, according as it believes, so it must be done unto it. For, if these lepers had not believed and stood fast in their faith, they certainly would not have gone as they were commanded.. Wherefore, they were not healed because they went, but because they had faith; for it was by the impulse of this, that they went. Which thing I observe, lest some blind leader, falling upon this scripture, should fix his eyes upon the work only, and in the meantime, pass by or dissemble concerning the faith; and afterwards go forth and say, that works recommend us to God and procure our salvation, because these lepers went at the command of Christ, and so were cleansed. Which error, the most pernicious of all errors, must be resisted, in order that the faith of these lepers may be duly considered: for then it will be manifest, that it was not this work of going, but faith that obtained the cleansing.

The Lord also opposes this error by his cleansing them before the work was accomplished; for he not only commands them to go, but to shew themselves to the priests. Now it is evident that they were cleansed before they came to the priests, and before they had finished the work which was enjoined them. Whereas, if they had then obtained their cleansing when they had

come and had offered their gifts; the priests might have pretended that they were cleansed by virtue of the work and sacrifice; as they afterwards really did and miserably seduced them.

But it has been before observed more than once, that there are two kinds of works; the one performed before and without faith, the other after and by faith. And as nature, even without faith, cannot be idle and without some exercise; much less can faith be idle. Moreover, as natural works do not cause or precede nature, but nature must precede and produce works from and by itself; so also, works do not cause faith, but proceed themselves from faith, and are wrought by it. Therefore, there must be works, but they deserve nothing, nor are they available unto salvation, for both salvation and merit must first be obtained by faith. Hence it comes to pass, that the works of faith are not of choice, but free. For these lepers stood ready with so free a mind, that if Christ had enjoined them any thing else, they would, without any objecting, have done that also. And if any one had asked them, if they went to the end that they might for so doing be healed? they would have answered, by no means: which nevertheless they would have done, had their cleansing been as a reward for their works. So if you ask work-mongers, if they give themselves unto works that by virtue of them they may attain unto salvation? they immediately say they do, and deny that there can be salvation without them.

These lepers however will not thus answer: nay, they will rather say, that they hope to be cleansed by his mere goodness, without any regard whatever to their going: seeing that, they merely do this to the end that they might fulfil the law, although there was no need for their going. For all lepers might like these go to the priests, yet they would not obtain a cleansing; which, nevertheless, they must obtain, if the work of going be necessary and available unto cleansing. For, as our holy working saints are persuaded that whosoever worketh shall be saved; so also we must say here, Whosoever

goeth shall be saved. But, as cleansing takes place by virtue of faith only, so salvation comes by faith only. And as these lepers are compelled to go unto the priests, not on their own account, but on account of the priests, that their right may be complied with, although it be not done as a debt; so, all that are anointed with faith, must give themselves to good works, not seeking their own, but others' benefits, not that they owe them any thing, but they are to be kind toward their neighbour freely, even as Christ has done unto us; concerning which we have fully spoken above.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.

This turning back, must have been after he had shewn himself to the priests with the rest. The Evangelist, however, does not mention how they came to the priests, and what took place there. But, from the return of this one, Luke would take occasion to observe what took place in that respect.—He alone returned, having to his grief left the others behind him. For since he gives thanks unto Christ with such an earnestness of spirit, and with his whole heart, and follows him with such true praising and blessing, we may from that conclude, with what vehemency he urged the rest, exhorting them, pressing them, and trying every means to persuade them to go back with him, and, with him, acknowledge so great a benefit. Hence we may also collect that he was deeply grieved that he had spent upon the others labour in vain, and that he left them with weeping and much sorrow. All these things and many others of the same kind, that love which he had for Christ constrains us to conjecture; which love, leaves nothing untried, fears no one, and regards nothing, so that Christ obtain the praise and honour due unto him. What storm then shall we say it was that arose, which so powerfully tore away from this one the other nine? and especially when we hear what a plausible beginning and increasing in the faith of Christ there

was in them all? It is not probable that they of themselves departed so shamefully from Christ: it must be, that some deadly calumniators first undermined their faith: seeing that, they now take from Christ that honour which before they had so freely and willingly given unto him; thus turning that love, so happily begun, into hatred.

Nor can we consider that it was any common kind of departure that so obstinately withstood the prayers and entreaties of this one. But why do we employ a multitude of words in investigating the cause of the deep ingratitude of these nine? All this was effected by the secret lies of the priests. They could not bear that the glory of so great a miracle should be given to Christ. They must therefore have set aside the authority of Christ, with the most powerful persuasions, to overturn in their hearts a faith so well begun. By what arguments then shall we suppose that this was accomplished? Why, since their attack was levelled against Christ and faith, it is easy to divine what they said and what they did. Without doubt they laid hold of those things that are opposed to faith: that is, they with bitter hatred instilled into their minds, not to believe that they were cleansed by Christ, but to give thanks unto God who had had respect unto their offering and unto the prayers of the priests, and who had heard them on these accounts, and had restored them to their former health.—Moreover, they overturned their hearts by plying them with two most powerful assaults.

First: that it was impossible unto the powers of human nature to take away a leprosy, and that the power of God only could do it; and that, therefore, that miracle could by no means be ascribed unto Christ, (for they made him man only, and not God also,) for that a horrible blasphemy would be committed against God, if they should ascribe that unto a creature which was of God alone. O with what a specious pretext and powerful assault did they attack these lepers! How strong must that faith be, which could stand when God himself and his divine glory and working were set

before it, and threats added if it should deny them? Who would not think that they did well in yielding to such a temptation?

The other assault was,—they brought forward the law of Moses with great authority, which commanded that he who would not hearken unto the priests giving sentence according to the precept of the law, should be punished with death, Deut. xvii. Wherefore, when the priests here declared that that cleansing proceeded from God, and not from Christ, they bound the consciences of these nine by the most powerful of all bonds, and crushed their faith to powder. For, to act contrary to the law, was to fight against God. But, behold, how horrible this temptation must have been, which set before the conscience both temporal and eternal death, the indignation both of God and men, the greatest and worst of sins with the greatest and most dreadful of punishments! What heart would not have yielded to these threats, or at least, would not have trembled with fear? and especially, when the law of God was set before it? Thus those nine departed, and would rather have denied ten Christs than have incurred the wrath of God, or have transgressed the divine law; thinking, that they thus acted rightly.

Moreover, who doubts that a certain wonderful and appalling tragedy was presented to the eyes of this one leper? He, deserted by his companions who had fled over to the enemy's side, was compelled to brave the assault of the priests alone. Him too they tempted to a revolt with numberless arguments: at one time using prayers, at another threats: persuading him, not to call down upon himself the wrath of God, but to believe the priests: not to despise the law of Moses: and to take heed, that he was not killed as a blasphemer against God.

Here this wretched man was considered by one a fool, by another a madman, if not worse than that; and was accounted by one a heretic, and by another an apostate. He was cleansed, indeed, but that cleansing had brought into peril his body and his life, his goods

and his fame, his friends and his companions. Moreover, he was compelled to leave those who devotedly studied good works and acknowledged the true worship of God, to the enjoyment of their good name, while he was called a sinner and ungodly. And, because he was a Samaritan, perhaps he made the less impression upon their hearts, while they thought thus with themselves,—‘Let him go to destruction: why should we trouble ourselves about him. He is a Samaritan and an out-cast, not belonging to the family of Israel.’ Or else, perhaps they pitied him as a man deranged and beside himself. Behold this was the greatest, and of all the most powerful assaults upon faith: he that yields not to this, shall stand for ever: for he has triumphed over all the terror both of death and of hell that can exist, either in this world or that which is to come.

And thus is the name of God made of to plot the greatest iniquities, and to cover sin, by the abuse of Satan and ungodly men. For as these know that the name of God is held in fear and reverence by all, and that nothing is more sacred among men, especially among the simple and sincere; on this reverend name they seize, and, with a brazen brow, colour it over with their impostures, falsely declaring that whatever they set forth is God. Then the miserable multitude, which they call after them, follow, being persuaded, that whatever is set forth under the name of God, is to be received and embraced. Hence, there is need, yea, the utmost need, of a deep understanding, that thou be not moved away when the name of God is held forth and accompanied with threats: for idols have arrogated to themselves the name and honour of God.

These priests also the Pope has most sedulously imitated, continually abusing the name of God to every kind of sin and iniquity: whom, all his disciples and false teachers have as sedulously followed. But above all, those ecclesiastics, (as they are called,) and those spiritual ones, endeavour to persuade all men, that their impious state and works, though destitute of faith, are divine and Christian. But the worst abuse of the name

of God is when the devil, assailing the conscience in the agony of death, sets before thee that God, being kindled into wrath, will not have thee nor acknowledge thee as his: concerning which, David, Psalm iii. saith, "Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." Or as the Jews reviled Christ when hanging on the cross, saying, "Let us see if he be the Son of God: let him save himself. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him." As though they had said, It is impossible that he should help him, for all is over with him.—Or, if God himself try a man in this way, and leave him to feel in his conscience nothing else than that God has declared war against him, and will no longer account him a friend, (as the prophet saith, Psalm xxx. "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes," and as Abraham, Gen. xv. and Jacob xxxii. experienced,) here faith is put to the extremity of trial, and sustains the pains of hell. Here thou hast need of all armour, not to be moved when God himself is thus set before thee. These are the most valiant of all Christians, and the greatest of all spirits.

All these things I say, that we may thoroughly learn to cleave unto faith steadily, and as it were, with firmly grappling hands; and that once having that, we may always conceive a good hope in God, which may expect from him every good thing; and be torn away therefrom by no power whatever, whether man or Satan, death, law, the name of God, and so God himself, bring us into trouble. And unto this we shall attain the more surely, if we have continually before us that word of Paul,—that the especial nature of faith, is, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is not the substance of things we are to flee from, nor the evidence of things which are seen. That is, the nature of faith is, to rest in the goodness of God, and to set before itself the view of nothing whatever, but that which is to be hoped for and desired. Wherefore, to set before your view those things which are to be fled from and dreaded, is not a view of faith, but a temptation. For God has not built our faith, trust, and peace of

conscience, upon indignation and wrath, but upon grace !

Hence all his promises are sweet and full of mercy. On the other hand, his threatenings are dreadful, and bitter ; which, nevertheless, are to be believed ; but yet, Christian faith is not to be built upon them ; for faith is to have before it nothing but goodness, and to rest wholly in that. And yet, we are to bear assuredly in mind, that that goodness which faith represents to itself, and in which it rests, is not seen nor to be perceived by any of our senses. Wherefore, whatever our natural sense feels, whether it be what delights us or what grieves us, faith is to be assured, that that is not what it ought to believe, but a temptation which it ought to thrust away by shutting its eyes and all its senses against it ; and it is to cleave only unto those good things which are not perceptible by the sight or senses, until the temptation shall have passed by ; even as Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle, until the great and strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, had passed by him !

Wherefore, the greater assaults and temptations this one leper sustained thus alone and with an unshaken mind, by so much the more was his faith strengthened and perfected ; and it came unto this perfection for an example unto us, that we should not be turned away from Christ by these priests and spiritual bug-bears, even though they have the whole world to back them. And it was a wonder that he was not moved by this authority of the priests, seeing that they were persons whose peculiar office it was to shew unto others the way of truth, and who were supposed to excel others in understanding.

Here learn then, what an effectual answer is given to the Pope and the spiritual and learned doctors, whenever they puff themselves up and boast of their power, their authority, their office, and their dignity ; and affirm, that what they say is to be believed, and that only to be attended to which they say. They well know how to turn to their purpose, this place where

Christ sends the lepers to the priests. And they well know also, how to dissemble their conviction, that this one poor creature, although not a priest but a layman, nor an Israelite but a Samaritan, condemned the doctrine and great name of the priests, and was wiser than they all; not at all regarding, that he stood quite alone while the greatest part of mankind sided with the priests. Now if it be enough, (as our priests assert it is,) that they are called the spiritual, the learned, the primacy, the power; and that, they have moreover the greatest part of the people to favour their pretensions; then, (although we are not to contradict that which magistracy, dignity, power, and the voice of the people command,) this Samaritan greatly sinned. But God forbid that we should so receive it. For the Gospel here teaches, that none are under deeper error, and none more deeply seduce men than priests, ecclesiastics, scribes, the highest, the most reverend, and the greatest: and therefore, none are more warily to be guarded against, than this tribe of men. Though Christ, by sending these lepers unto them, intimates, that it is not their office itself, but the abuse of that office that is to be guarded against: and he gives us a rule, how far we are to believe them, and how far we are to follow their doctrine: that they are to be hearkened unto, as far as they teach according to the words and sense of the law; which Moses, Deut. xvii. sets forth in a very clear manner, saying, that the priests are to give sentence according to the law, and that the man who will not hearken to them when they so do, is to be stoned with stones until he die. But if they propose any thing that is not according to the law, or that is their own doctrine, no respect is to be paid either to their office or their authority, and they are to be condemned and the scripture alone to be adhered to. That every-where common saying is true, ‘No one writes wrong, but the scribe: so, no one preaches wrong but the preacher.’ And, according to another adage that is in every ones mouth, ‘The more wise, the farther from wisdom!’

Since, therefore, priests who are appointed by a

divine ordination, and who teach others the law, frequently and deeply err; what wonder is it, I pray you, if our popes, cardinals, and bishops err, whose appointment is neither confirmed of God nor by men, but is of themselves? Moreover, they neither preach nor meditate: they do nothing but bring human doctrines and their own dreams into the church. Here, therefore, it is not a corruption of office nor of doctrine; the whole from top to bottom is nothing but error; so that, their doctrine and life are not to be called into dispute, but to be shunned. They are any thing but priests, and it is concerning priests we are here speaking; as we shall farther hear.

But how is it Luke here writes, that this leper only saw that he was cleansed? Did not the rest see it, when the whole ten were cleansed? Then certainly the other nine, (as we have heard was the custom,) praised God together with the priests, and magnified *him*, that they might not give this glory unto Christ as being a creature. Why then does he say that this one, and he only, glorified God “with a loud voice?”—In the first place, this is expressed by Luke, according to the common manner in which we speak of the ungrateful, and say, ‘He does not see the benefit conferred upon him.’ That is, he will not see it. It does not touch his heart; he does not think about being grateful; but pretends he does not know, nay, condemns, and will not see, what has been done for him.—So these nine pretended they could not see this benefit of Christ: they would not see it, but despised him as though he had never done them any service whatever. On the other hand, a grateful man cannot forget a benefit conferred upon him, if he wish to do it never so much; but there is always a thought following his mind, how he can in return serve the author of the benefit he has received, and testify by any act of gratitude that he is not unmindful of him. It was with such eyes as these that the Samaritan saw his cleansing.

Again, the other nine did not heartily praise God, but in tongue only, cursing him at the same time, in the

person of Christ. But however, they would not have committed a capital sin if they had not at that time looked upon Christ as God, for as John saith, he was "not yet glorified." And perhaps that one leper only considered him as a holy man. But these sacrificers wished to lead him to such a pitch of iniquity, as to look upon Christ as a sinner, and a man who was a blasphemer against God. Of such utter contempt did they consider him worthy, and such poison did they endeavour to instil into the minds of these lepers. Whereas, Christ did nothing at that time but so work that they might receive him as sent to them of God, and might believe that God dwelt, spoke, and wrought in him. But of that these priests could not be persuaded, nor could they bear that it should be believed by others: but they wished him to be considered as sent by Satan, as full of devils, and as speaking of, and working the works of, devils. And such a faith as this did the nine suffer themselves to receive.

This one however was a bold champion for Christ. He confidently affirmed that God was with him, and spoke by him and in him, wrought miracles by him, and dwelt in him. And hence it came to pass, that his open confession and the action of his graces, whereby he acknowledged the benefit of Christ, were recorded. The praises of the rest, however, are buried in silence. But under what temptations and assaults this one stood fast in his faith, has been mentioned before. And truly that faith must have been great indeed, which so firmly stood by him when despised, condemned, and cursed by the priests, by the proud in science, the nobles, the high, and the mighty of the whole people. Who would dare in this day to feel and speak so nobly for Christ, while the Pope, the bishops, the doctors, the monks, the mass priests, the princes, and all their gang condemned him and sent forth a threatening bull against him? And this we now see done openly.

From this part of the Gospel history we are taught what works faith, when exercised and tried by various assaults and temptations, puts forth: and also what the

true worship of God is, and what that divine honour is that is to be rendered unto him. Some build in his name churches of immense labour and magnitude, some institute masses of enormous cost, some strive to gain his favour by the tinkling of bells; and you may find some also who light up waxen candles to him that he might see them; thus playing with him as if he were a little boy, who wanted our good things and attentions. And although the building of churches and instituting of masses, were in the beginning intended that Christians might there meet together in order to worship God in truth, yet, that worship was afterwards lost and consigned to oblivion; and then our minds were given up to building colleges, to chantries, to ringing of bells, to burning of candles, to particular garments, to incense, and all those other preparations for the worship of God; and upon these only, as upon deceptive rocks, have we made shipwreck. So that now, all this trumpery is considered by us the highest worship of God, and beside this we know no other. Thus we have acted not less absurdly than that man would do, who, intending to build a house, should devote all his time and faculties to the scaffolding, and after all, through the whole of his life, never lay one stone towards raising the real building. And then, just imagine to yourself where such an one would be, when all those scaffoldings should be taken away!

But this is the true worship of God:—to turn back, and, with a loud voice to glorify God! This is the greatest of all works, either in heaven or in earth! and moreover, it is the only one whereby we can please God! For he needs none of all other works, nor can he receive them: he can only be loved by us, and magnified with praises. It is said concerning this in the 50th Psalm, ‘What wilt thou give unto me, seeing all things are mine? Offer me the sacrifice of praise: this is the work that honoureth me. Thinkest thou that I will eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats?’ So also he may say at this time, to the church-founders, the frankincense-offerers, the chanters, the bell-ringers, and the candle-lighters, ‘Thinkest thou, that I am

blind, deaf, and houseless? Love me and praise me; and make yourselves the frankincense and the noise; instead of these !’

. To “turn back,” is to bring back unto God the grace and benefit received, just as one would return to his duty and bring back that which he had taken away; it is, not to keep those things to one’s self, nor to trust in them as our own, not to boast and glory before others on account of them; in a word, it is, not to have a self-complacency in them and despise others, but to make all our pleasure, our boasting and glorying, to be in him who has freely given them unto us; and therefore, we are so to account of them, that, if God should wish to deprive us of them again, we should willingly still love and praise him. O how small is the number of those who thus “return !” You will hardly find one among ten ! If any one has a more elegant head of hair than another, he immediately appears to himself the most handsome of all about him ? With what insolence then think ye he would vaunt himself, if he were to have the gifts of the spirit or of reason ? These are those ravens, who, flying away from the ark of Noah, never return ! In a word, to “turn back” means, to cleave, not unto the gifts, but unto him that gave them !

Again, that “loud voice” whereby God is glorified comprehends these two things.

First: to magnify him in our hearts, to follow after him with tender affection, desiring to taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Concerning which it is said by the apostle Peter, 1 Epist. ii. and in the 34th Psalm, “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” And all this, faith, when tried, teaches at the end of the temptation. While the conflict and trial last, faith labours and works hard, and all things appear unto it hard and bitter. But as soon as the hour of trial has passed over, and we find ourselves still holding fast, and standing in our faith, then the sweetness of divine goodness is felt, and God is welcome, grateful, and sweet to the heart: so that the man has no greater pleasure than in conflicting and

being tried and assaulted, and finds a certain thirst and desire after those trials and difficulties which the whole world dreads, and which he himself, perhaps, at first dreaded, as fearing some great evil from them. Concerning these trials, the 2d Psalm speaks thus, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart." An heroic and deeply-exercised faith so changes a man, and gives him so new a taste for things, that he does not seem to live in his element if there be no trials for him to conflict with. And of so different a spirit is he from the rest of mankind, as to all the pursuits of this world, that he glories in living amid all those things as a pleasure, which are the world's greatest grief; and all those things which are the world's delight, are so great a gift to him, that the whole of this life works in him that disgust, that he longs from his heart to be free from it by death. Behold such were the feelings of Paul also when he broke out into these words, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That is, my delight and my life are a disgust and death unto the world; and, on the contrary, the delights and life of the world are more bitter than death unto me. Hence saith the apostle again, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." To this taste of things and this knowledge, no work-mongers ever attain. They are unwilling to be tried and put under affliction, and therefore they must remain ignorant of faith, and unacquainted with spiritual things.

Secondly: To glorify God with a loud voice is, to break forth into words and testify before the world, what the heart feels towards God within. Which is doing nothing else, but raising against one's self the enmity and hatred of the whole world, and bringing about one numberless messengers ordering us to death and to the cross. For whoever with a loud voice proclaims the praises and glory of God, must, of necessity, thereby condemn the honour and glory of the world; and declare, that all the works, as well as the words of all men, together with all the name that they procure to themselves by them, are a thing of nought; and that the

works and words of God only are worthy of being proclaimed and praised. These things the world cannot endure: and for these things thou wilt have to swallow down terrible reproach; for, on this account, they will call thee a heretic, a seducer and blasphemer, as protesting against so many good works, and against a spiritual life, together with the whole of divine worship. Then silence will be imposed on thee, or a bonfire prepared for thee to be cast into; for it is impossible that they should endure this thy boldness of speech. Those most holy ones will not allow thee, an unknown upstart, thus to speak against and cut to pieces their ceremonies and worshippings. And yet, on the other hand, thou canst not be unlike thyself and remain in silence, but must with a loud voice proclaim, as the leper did, the praise and glory of God in his works and words; and thus, by thine own hand thou bringest a dire destruction on thyself, and art reduced to ashes. And then the Pope increases his calendar, and inserts in 'red letters' the names of those who perpetrated these things upon thee, and adds them to the catalogue of saints. Thee, however, he blots out from the book of life, and casts thee down lower than hell; and thou art considered a rotten and deplorable member cut off from the most holy body of the church, that thou infect not the church by thy putridity and devilish doctrine.

This is what Christ predicted, Matt. xxiv. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake."—But, why for thy name sake? Because they will not endure the name, the praise, and the honour of God. For if they were to admit these, it would be all over with their own things; God alone would stand manifest as being wise, good, just, true, and powerful; and they themselves as being fools, evil, unjust, liars, false, and destitute of every thing that is good. And who among them could bear such a diabolical heresy, as that so universal a way of divine worship, and so pleasant a life, should be altered and abolished on account of God, as a thing foolish, unrighteous, false, unprofitable! Away with such things, (say they) they cannot be done at the insti-

gation of God, but of Satan!—Behold, it was by holding on this way of life, that all the prophets, and Christ himself, were punished with the shedding of their blood. Hence with a loud voice to glorify God and proclaim his praises before the whole world, is a thing full of peril.

Now, the outside saints, and murderers of Christ, do not with a less, but with an equally loud voice, praise and glorify God and his works. Nay, they proclaim the things concerning God with more noise than the true saints: so that, in this day, every corner is filled with these proclaimers, who extol God with wonderful praises: that he alone is worthy to be praised and honoured: using too, the same voice and same words as godly ministers use. What then is the reason that the praises of these are cold? Or, what is wanting in them? Why this—they do indeed, like this leper, cast themselves at the feet of Christ and give him thanks, but they rather would have Christ cast himself down at their feet and give them thanks. The Jews also gave all honour unto God, but knew not how to endure Christ: so these, while nothing is taken from what they hold, and no one brings their institutions to the test, will make a great noise and wonderfully extol God. But if any one bring them down to the test of this doctrine, and enter upon condemning them out of their own mouths; that is, that both they and all the worshippings in which they are engaged, are a thing of nought, and false and foolish, all their noise and soundings of praise cease immediately; and then, it stands manifest, that they laud and praise God with their mouths, but themselves in their hearts.

But it is not enough that thou testify, with a madened noise and vociferation, that God doeth all things, and that all our works are vain. Thou must be willing that this same be said of all *thy* works, how splendid soever they may be. Thou canst bear that Christ thy enemy be nothing, and canst allow whatever he does to be despised; and thou thinkest that to be done justly, considering that his works are not of God, but against

God. But as to thyself, thou standest still, and canst not allow thyself to be accounted nought with Christ. Thou wouldst have all thy own things to be accounted of God, and to be condemned by no one. How then can it be, that thou shouldst ever endure a thus rejected Christ? much less cast thyself at his feet and account thyself unworthy to be despised with him? Since therefore God hides himself in the despised Man, Christ, and it has seemed good unto him to dwell in him, think not that thou wilt ever find Christ any where but where contempt is found. And hence, thou must come to that state, to think thyself happy, and to rejoice that thou art exposed to contempt. In a word, thou must think and fall down at the feet of thy contempt which cries aloud that all thy things are nought; so that, it may not only be expressed in words, but in reality, when thou proclaimest that God alone, and no man, is to be praised. And thus, that doctrine will be first exemplified in thyself: and then, thou wilt suffer, for the doctrines' sake, all the things above-mentioned, and wilt yet consider thyself unworthy of all those things which thou endurest. It was in this manner that Christ also taught, and bore the name of the only God; and this was what first and above all things fell upon his own head; so that, at last, he was put to death in the most dreadful manner, and in that conflict which no other will ever endure.

This example of glorifying God is most rich and most great, and might occupy a long dissertation. But it is enough for us to have shewn, how great a thing it is to praise God in reality, and to fall down on our faces at the feet of the Man, Christ, the most despised of all men. This is what the apostles did, Acts v. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." So also it is said, Psalm xvii. that the enemies of Christ shall "lick the dust," and shall "fall down before him:" that is, as Paul saith, shall glory in affliction and the cross, which shall come upon them on account of that praising of God, and for condemning all

human righteousness. For, since Christ himself suffered the cross and punishment, such a value has been put upon them, that no one is accounted worthy of them, and they are to be embraced and blessed as a distinguished grace.

And it is these things that make it manifest how very widely the Christian life differs from the natural. For, 1. It despises itself. 2. It loves and thirsts after being despised. 3. It proves, that whatever will not be despised, rushes headlong into every kind of destruction. 4. It is itself despised, and on account of this contempt, and because it condemns others, it incurs persecution. 5. It accounts itself unworthy to endure such persecution.—Here then the world and nature are shut out by the comparison. What then is to become of every thing else?

There is, however, one thing more here still remaining; namely, ‘falling down at the feet of Christ,’ concerning which the priests know nothing, nor do they wish to know any thing. For it is not every kind of faith that is effectual here: it must be faith in Christ: it is that alone that truly humbles.

And he was a Samaritan.

But what moved the Evangelist to add to this history this particular above all the rest,—that “he was a Samaritan?” Hereby he opens our eyes and teaches us, that there are two kinds of men who worship God in two different ways. The one is, those who carry with them the name and appearance of an upright, spiritual, and holy life, and exercise themselves therein, wonderfully in all kinds of works, while the whole together is nothing but outside show; they are very ravening wolves concealed under sheep’s clothing: nevertheless, they procure to themselves thereby a great name and reputation, and nearly all men look upon them as the true ministers of God. And hence, they have an overflowing abundance of wealth, honour, friends, and the good things of this world; and that, all under the name of God, whom they consider to be in the midst of

them. And if any one think otherwise of them, they hold him a Jew, a Turk, and an apostate.

The other kind of men carry with them the appearance of certain stupid dolts; for nothing appears to be more ignorant than they, nor farther from the knowledge of God. In a word, they are all Samaritans: which name strikes the ear of the Jew with no less abhorrence than the name Turk, infidel, heathen, or heretic, strikes ours. For the appellation 'people of God' was given to the Jews only: and it was considered, that they alone of all men knew and had among them the true worship of God, and so, God himself. And they were exasperated against no one nation so much as against the Samaritans; because this people also, as well as the Jews, wished to be considered the people of God. Hence, a Samaritan was looked upon by the Jews in the same light as an apostate, who has turned his back upon Christianity, is by us.

And, although we cannot deny that the Samaritans were destitute of right faith, and that the Jews had the law and oracles of God, yet the enmity between these two people was kept up in a human, and in the most preposterous manner. For, those who boasted the most of their Judaism, and despised the Samaritans in comparison with themselves, were the coldest Jews, and worse Samaritans than those who really were Samaritans by nature. But, as God loveth truth, and hates outside show and all its ostentation, with perfect hatred, it comes to pass, that he reverses the case, taking unto himself the Samaritan, and rejecting the arrogant Jew. Hence it is manifest, that *they* are not his people, who arrogate to themselves that appellation in splendor and honour; but that *they* are his people, who carry with them the appearance of heretics and apostates, and who seem to be the peculiar people of Satan.

Things are just the same at this day. Ecclesiastics, mass-priests, and monks, call themselves the servants of God, and appear so to be unto others, nor is any one considered to be a Christian who does not believe as they believe. Whereas, none live less like

Christians and the people of God, than those among this rabble who appear to be such, and pride themselves the most on that name. On the contrary, those whom they pronounce heretics, many of whom they have burnt and compelled to dig the ground ; (as John Huss and such good men ;) these they will not consider worthy the name of Christians, when they alone are the true Christians. And as this is the case, the Gospel has this course, that none ‘ turn back,’ none ‘ with a loud voice glorify God,’ none ‘ fall down at the feet of Christ,’ but these Samaritans who are doomed to be despised, condemned, and accursed as heretics, apostates, erroneous, the peculiars of Satan, and what not. Wherefore, we must guard continually against every thing that has a fair show externally, and doubt not but it is all an imposture. On the other hand, we are to take particular heed, that we cast not away that which has no external show to recommend it, lest, in rejecting those who carry with them no external recommendation, we reject at our own great peril Christ and God ; which thing happened unto the Jews. And this is the purport of Christ’s words which now follow :

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God but this stranger.

The stranger alone performs the duty of a grateful man, and gives glory to God purely and sincerely. O awful example ! Of these ten, there is only one found grateful, and he one of the lowest and most despised among men ! So that God utterly passes by all that is wise, great, spiritual, and showy in appearance ! And yet, this latter sort of men live securely, become more and more hardened every day, and are more obstinately set to defend their tenets !

Nor is this less horrible.—The Lord well knew that those ten were healed, which they themselves little expected would be done. Moreover, he does not remain silent, but asks where they are, and looks about for them ; saying, “ But where are the nine ? ” O what

horror will there be, when their conscience shall feel this inquiry of Christ concerning them, and they shall be compelled to answer, where they have been, and why they did not give glory to God? Then they will say, What? Have we not glorified God, and given thanks unto him as our priests have taught us? Here it will be made manifest, whether or not this excuse will suffice—that, under the covering of the name of God, we have listened to human doctrine, and, under pretence of God's name-sake have omitted what the oracles of God enjoin! We are fully admonished in the Gospel to beware of human doctrines: and therefore, thou wilt clear thyself by no excuse, if thou permit thyself to be imposed upon by them. We have all in baptism most solemnly promised, that we would obey Christ and his doctrine. No one has then taken upon himself to follow the Pope, the bishops, and the ecclesiastics. Finally, Christ has expressly forbidden us to have any thing whatever to do with the doctrines of men, and has declared that God is in vain worshipped by them.

But Christ consoles his afflicted Samaritans, who are compelled to expose their lives to peril for his name-sake from the power of the priests and Jews prevailing against them. For their hopes are propped up by the consideration, that he looks for the other nine, and judges them as sacrilegious for plundering God of his honour and glory, but justifies the Samaritan. Much assurance is added to their hope from its being certain, that their cause will prevail with God and stand unshaken; and that the cause of their adversaries will be condemned, although while they live here upon earth, they look down from on high upon others, and appear to do all things rightly.

Wherefore, turn thy mind to this—that Christ, before he justifies the Samaritan, judges the other nine, that we may be at a certainty, and not be in haste to seek revenge, but commit that unto him, and continue in attending to those things that belong unto us. He is of himself intent upon defending the right, and revenging

the wrong: so that, before he gives the reward unto his Samaritans, he will punish the ungodly. Moreover, he makes use of many words in this judgment upon them, certainly more than he does to the Samaritan, so that it might be manifest to every one, how deeply he is affected, and how far he is from forgetting either *their* unrighteousness or *our* righteousness. Nor does he wait till they come before him and be there accused, but he inquires for them himself: so that, without doubt, the ungodly ways of the wicked move him long before they can hurt our minds or do us any mischief or harm: concerning which it is written, Deut. xxxii. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." And again, Rom. xii. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath."

And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.

Behold, I pray you, are not these words worthy of admiration—his ascribing the cleansing unto faith? By this declaration he condemns the declaration of the priests, who told the other nine, that it was their sacrifice in obedience to the law that procured them their cleansing. But the declaration of Christ stands and prevails:—that it was not for their going to the priests, nor for their oblation, but by their faith only that they were healed. And therefore, as was observed before, faith admits no works near it, so as to be of any service to it unto the attainment of righteousness and salvation. For the peculiar work and nature of faith is, to admit nothing near it as a helper. Works are to be done to another end; namely, to benefit our neighbour, even as Christ has benefited us.

And here, to draw up the crowning conclusion to the whole,—We may see set before us in this Gospel, a representation of the sum of the Christian life, together with all those things which ought to accompany a Christian.

These are the two hinges upon which the whole of Christianity turns,—faith and love. Faith receives the

good things, and love gives them forth again. Faith offers us to God that we may be his, and love offers us to our neighbour for his benefit. And where such a life is begun, there God is come, and he by afflictions and temptations causes it to advance, by means of which, the man grows more and more strong in faith and love; so that, in the progress of his own experience, he begins to love God with so cleaving an affection, and to find him so sweet, that he has no more fears remaining. And hereupon hope begins to grow up and the man has an assurance that he shall not be forsaken of God: concerning which Paul saith, Rom. v. "We glory in tribulations also; knowing, that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; (whereby, a man is found to be right inwardly, and in truth, as fire proves gold whether it be sterling or not;) and probation, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed."

And these same three things Paul mentions again in his Epistle to the Colossians, chap. vii. "We give thanks unto God—since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and love towards all the saints, for the hope that is laid up for you in heaven; whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel, which came unto you." And still more particularly, 1 Thess. i. "Making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father," &c.

How beautifully does he set forth these three things in their order! making faith to be in work, love in labour, and hope in tribulations or patience! As though he should say, your faith is not a dream or fancy, but life and work. So also your love cannot sit down inactive, nor indulge in ease, but is engaged in serving your neighbour; but all this is done in quiet. Moreover, your hope in afflictions is exercised through patience; and all is in Christ. For there can be neither faith, love, nor hope, out of Christ; as we have shewn before. Thus the Christian life by good goes through evil, until it break forth out of this course of life, and

arrive at his appointed goal. In the meantime, it thirsts not for revenge, but commits all judgment and retribution to the will of God.

And thus, it grows and enlarges “by little and little” in faith, love, and hope; and love which naturally flows out of faith divides itself, and takes two directions. It loves God first, from whom it receives all blessings in Christ; and then, its neighbour, that it might do unto him according to the benefits it has itself received of God. Wherefore, all the works of a man thus anointed, are directed to the benefit of his neighbour, and that for God’s sake, who hath loved him. Nor does it do any work with the design of gaining thereby the favour of God, except that of loving and praising him; and this it confesses openly before the whole world. For all other works God cannot endure: so that the whole of divine worship is from the mouth. Though doing good to our neighbour also, is serving God, yet I am here speaking of that worship only which is paid to God, of which no man whatever can partake; and that is solely loving and praising God. Which worship, if thou wilt firmly maintain, thou must of necessity, how great soever thou mayest be, expose thyself to all kinds of peril and evil. And what else requirest thou unto Christianity?—If thou wilt be a Christian, embrace faith and love, and stand fast in them, and then, thou hast and knowest all things. Amen!

SERMON VIII.

CONCERNING THE SUM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

St. Paul, writing to Timothy, thus sets forth, in his First Epistle, chap. i. in a few words, the sum of the Christian life.

But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

You without doubt very well know, my dearest friends, with what strict injunction God has commanded his Word to be heard and learned. That Word is, with him, of the utmost moment: and therefore, he has done much in the defence of it, and in the proclamation of it to the world. He exposed all his prophets to peril, and at last sent his Son for the same Word's sake; whom he subjected to crucifixion and death. And what persecutions did his apostles not endure, and what afflictions have all Christians not borne, for the Word's sake? To some, he has committed the faithful ministration of the Word: to the rest, he has left the duty of hearing it. And, even if there were no other motive to constrain us to this duty of hearing the Word than this,—because it is the good-will and pleasure, and the command of God that we should do it, yet, this one reason ought to have sufficient weight with us.—We ought as creatures to obey our Lord and Creator, and to do it with the greatest readiness of mind; seeing that, he has given us such an abundance of good things, and continues daily to give us more; for which we never shall be able to render unto him worthy and sufficient thanks.

But however, he is not content with having commanded us to do this, and with having required it of us as a service due to him; but he promises, that there shall flow to us therefrom great fruits and benefits; having allowed it to be proclaimed, that hearing his Word is paying to him the greatest and most acceptable of all divine worship! For the Lord whom we serve is great, and there are many and various kinds of services, and numberless ways of worship, and we can serve him in many different forms: but, this

one way of worship,—hearing his Word, is far above all the rest !

Because, if any faithful ploughman or citizen, or any other person under subjection, serve his master, he at the same time serves God. So also does a child, or a man-servant or maid-servant in a family, if they be obedient and diligently do their duty. And so again do rulers and parents, if they rule well and discharge their duty faithfully. All these serve God. For all these things are his will and command, and he requires them of us. And with these kinds of services the world would be full, if there were those who would duly perform them. For God has committed to, and laid on every one his duties in his station, in which he can and ought to serve him. For we are his own, and he has so ordained that his services should abound every where ; that no one might have room for excuse, or say, that he did not know how or in what way he ought to serve God ; and that he might not seek after, or form out to himself, any other ways, or peculiar forms of serving God which he never ordained, and, at the same time disregard those which he has commanded ; just as we have hitherto done in our blindness !

But, far above all other services and acts of obedience, God has honoured and extolled that of preaching and hearing his Word. And therefore, this is the service that he has especially chosen out of all other under heaven as his delight, and he has been pleased to call it the highest worship of him. For the other services are those which are rendered to men also. Hence, he has set apart a particular day out of every week for this service, in which we are to attend to nothing else. Though we are to serve God during the whole week also, by other employments for which he has not appointed any particular day. But he has chosen this day in particular, and commanded it to be observed, that there might be time and opportunity for duly serving him, and that no one might have occasion to run to the complaint, that his labours will not allow him time and opportunity. Moreover, he has appointed particular

places for this worship ; that is, churches and houses where we might assemble. Nay, it is for this that he has ordained and continued the whole order of ministers, and has given and bestowed other things, which pertain to the discharge of the ministerial office ; such as the knowledge of many languages, and many other gifts besides. In a word, he has by an especial injunction commanded the whole world to account this worship holy, and far above all other. And he wishes this worship so to be the delight of all Christians, that it might be declaratively manifest, how highly he esteems, and with what pleasure he beholds, their setting forth and exercising themselves in his Word.

And a blessed thing would it be, if it could be truly brought into practice, to call going to hear a sermon *going to worship God*, and *and going to worship God in the highest !* and if, all who assembled to hear the Word, could be said to be *gathered together for the true and highest worship of God !* For in this way it is evident that the apostles and fathers of old spoke : and it was from them that we received the sayings ‘ going to hear mass,’ and ‘ going to mass,’ which afterwards remained in constant use : and hence, the Pope has commanded, (if it be in truth,) in his decrees, that every one shall hear mass on each sabbath-day. But no one was accustomed to say, ‘ I want to go and see mass,’ but ‘ to hear mass :’ the proper meaning of which is, I want to go to the worship of God, and to hear the Word of God ; which is the greatest and most essential part of the mass ; and not as the Pope and his sacrificers (so to call them) now do, who mutter over the masses to themselves, in which there is nothing of the Word of God taught or heard ; and yet they make this muttering to be the most important part of the mass, and call it the Canon.

The term ‘ mass,’ which appears to have been received from the apostles, is, in the Hebrew, of the same signification as rate, tribute, or service : even as a peasant or any one holding a farm, pays his lord mass, or, a due tribute or rent : or, as a man serves his ruler,

and therein acknowledges him his lord, and yields him due obedience. Thus it was that the apostles said, ‘ I will go to mass ;’ as though they had said, I will go and render unto God his due, or, I will go and serve God, and pay him that highest of all worship, which is due unto him, and in which he so much delights. Hence, to hear mass, is, in its true signification, nothing else than to hear the Word of God, and to serve him therein.

THIS I explain, to the end that we might be stirred up and admonished in the way of hearing the Word of God : seeing that, the Word is not a precept only which we ought to obey, but contains the most full promises, and hearing it is the most pleasing unto God, and the highest worship whereby we can honour him ; and as far exceeds all other acts of worship, as the splendor of the sun exceeds the the light of all other celestial luminaries ; as far as the sabbath exceeds the other six days ; and, in a word, as far as the heavenly kingdom exceeds the earthly. For herein all things are holy, and especially chosen,—the time, the place, the person ; and that for the Word’s sake, which sanctifies the whole. Wherefore, we are here to use the utmost diligence, and take the most watchful heed, that we fall not into negligence and sloth, and that we be not overtaken with a disgust and loathing of hearing the Word, like those very nice and self-satisfied spirits, who seem to themselves to be quite masters of all these things, and to know them all to a great exactness, and much more perfectly than they can be set forth by any one else. Or as some others do, who are soon satiated with this hearing the Word, thinking within themselves, ‘ I have heard this often enough !’ ‘ What is the use of my going to hear this same story over again ?’ Such know not what a great and transcendently important a matter, nor what an exalted worship of God it is, that they are thus setting nought by, and neglecting with so much unconcern ! For, by thus despising his express command, and suffering his promise unto them to be made in vain, and by hindering or weakening as much as in them lies, by

their example, so high and acceptable a worship of God, they kindle the divine wrath in an unspeakable degree!

But, supposing this to be true, (which however is not so,) that thou knowest all these things to a nicety, and art as wise in them, and as well acquainted with them, as Christ himself; yet, thou seest with what intent devotedness he himself pursued the office of preaching, and gave himself to that work; with the subjects of which, nevertheless, he was before fully acquainted, and needed not the duty himself at all, while we stand so much in need of both. So also Paul, the chief of the apostles, although he was so well acquainted with these things, and so excellent a teacher of them, yet, he went throughout nations, and continued preaching them every where; nor, with all his knowledge, was he either tired or satiated. Nay, even God himself, who has given his Word unto us, hears it and sees it with pleasure, without being weary of it; which is manifest to all, who consider, what care and labour he has spent upon it, and also, with what strictness of injunction he has commanded it to be preached and exercised in, throughout the whole world, until the last day. And therefore, much less does it become thee to be tired of hearing the Word, the help of which is so necessary unto thee, both against the devil, and under all other temptations!

And even if thou shouldst not need it for thy instruction, yet, thou oughtest not to be so tired of it as to be prevented from devoting an hour to it every sabbath for the worship of God. For before, when thou wast given up to a false worship, and passedst whole days in the churches, running from church to church, and from altar to altar, thou wast neither tired nor wearied, nor didst thou then say as thou now dost, 'O I can hear nothing new,' 'I have seen all these things before;' but thou usedst to say, 'Well! I went to mass yesterday, and I have been to-day, but I will go and hear it again to-morrow.' With how much greater devotedness, then, oughtest thou now to attend to this, knowing that the

mass to which thou now goest is the only true mass, and the highest worship of God! How oughtest thou now to say—‘Well! even if I knew these things most perfectly, (which I do not,) yet for the sake of giving honour to God, and of testifying my willing obedience to him, I will render him this service: and with a will to love and praise him, I will go and hear his Word, that my Lord may see, how I desire to serve him by this highest of all worship wherein he takes so much delight! And, although no other advantage may redound to me, yet, I shall have this consolation,—that I have rendered unto him the most holy of all services, and one that is the most pleasing in his sight; with which, all other worshippings and services will bear no comparison, and are things of nought!

And now, if there be any who have no concern about these things, and who are not moved by considerations so important to hold the Word of God in reverence, duly value it, and to hear and learn it with willingness and desire, whenever an opportunity for so doing offers itself—if there be such, I am not inclined to trouble myself about them, for I cannot, nor would I if I could, drag any, in these matters, by the hair of their head. He that despiseth, let him despise still, and remain as one of the swine, (which indeed he is,) until that day wherein God will slay him and cast him into hell. For such an one cannot be a good man, nor is his sin a natural sin, but a certain devilish obduracy, who can thus continue to despise that for which God has appointed a place, a person, and a time; and unto which also God urges us by his command, lovingly invites us by his promises, and rouses and admonishes us by his declarations; offering the whole freely without price, which thou couldst not otherwise obtain by any labour or expense, and the excellency of which no gold can equal. But the devil so blinds men that he even raises in them a weariness and loathing of the Word of God: whence it comes to pass that they care not at all about what a treasure the Word of God is, but live like beasts, and despise all doctrine.

Wherefore, let these thoughts be our delight—that, whenever we read or hear the Word of God, either in private or public, and by whomsoever it is preached, we are then engaged in the highest worship of God, and in that worship which is most after his own heart. In this way, thou wilt stir thyself up to hear the Word, and to pray that God would attend it with his grace, that the seeds of it might not be scattered abroad in vain, but might bring forth more fruits than any one can recount. For the Word is never taught without fruits, where it falls among diligent and desiring hearers; and it cannot be, but that by the hearing thereof, thou must become better. And although for the present thou mayest see and feel no fruits, yet, in due time, thou shalt find them, and that plainly. But, with respect to the fruits which proceed from the Word, it is impossible to enumerate them all here, nor indeed can they be all enumerated.

THESE things I wished to say, upon this passage of Paul, by way of introduction, in order to stir us up to a more diligent hearing of the Word of God. And indeed, such an exhortation is highly necessary in our daily discourses, but is more especially required in speaking upon the present passage: for Paul here directly attacks those self-wise spirits, who strive to make themselves masters of the Word of God by their own wisdom, and then, soon persuade themselves that they quite understand it, and have no more need of any teacher, and betake themselves to vanities and vain janglings, endeavouring thereby to bring forth something new that the common people may hear it with eagerness: thus endeavouring to be teachers of the scriptures, to be instructors of all men, and to lead all men; not knowing, at the same time, what they say nor whereof they affirm. And this is that disorder and calamity which follow where the Word of God is not diligently and seriously set forth, and where the hearers have become weary of hearing, and the teachers slothful in preaching. And then, the hearers fall off and the churches are left desolate. Upon the back of this calamity, rise up vainly prating

spirits, who promise something new, in order to gain over the minds of the people, boasting themselves as masters of the whole scripture; and yet, at the same time, are men who are utterly ignorant themselves, never having experienced that themselves which they teach others. And this we see now taking place openly, and the divine wrath is kindled, and is hanging over us ready to punish our unconcern and ingratitude.

This is the reason why Paul thus commences his Epistle to his son Timothy: wherein, he warns him against the rising up of those teachers, who know how to prate a great deal about the law, and to bring forward many new questions and doctrines—what ought to be done—how righteousness is to be attained unto, &c.; all which things they do for the sake of mere show, to gain the eyes and applause of men, and thus to become teachers of others; whereas, after all, they are never enabled to teach any thing certain, or any thing that is of moment, but so confound all things, that there is no such thing as coming either at the head, the tail, or any part of what they teach. These praters do nothing but use sayings of this kind—You must be righteous—you must do good works—you must serve God, &c. The real sense and meaning of which words, they themselves do not understand. And when they are asked how these things are to be done, they begin to teach particularly,—this and this work must be done; you must be circumcised; you must offer sacrifice only on such an altar; you must go into such a monastery; you must go on pilgrimage to such a saint; you must build a church in honour of such a saint; you must institute a mass in such a place; you must light up so many candles; you must live on fish; you must pray over rosaries; you must purchase indulgences, &c. And when these things are all performed, then they give something else to do; and after that, something else. Therefore, they know not how to instruct any one fundamentally, much less are they able to say, This is the way: or, The whole sum of Christianity stands in this. And yet, all that they teach, thus boasting and

promising great things, must be accounted very excellent, and they must be looked upon as teachers infallible, and judges and masters over all others !

He, however, is to be accounted the great and excellent teacher, who shall at once touch upon the head and sum of all doctrine : that is, how a man is to live in heart, in conscience, and so, in the whole man ! Of this matter those fellows know nothing with all their profusions of words, but wander utterly aside from the sum and principal scope of the law. In the meanwhile, they confuse the mind of their hearers with such a farrago of words, that they know neither how to begin nor to end their prating ; and it is left in utter uncertainty what point all their Babel of crude babbling is intended to accomplish ; so that no one can be thereby bettered, much less get any confirmation in his conscience. This I have heretofore seen and deeply experienced in Popery, under our preachers of dreams.—What then is the sum of that doctrine which is to be delivered to the people ? The apostle Paul here answers—

The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

Here is the picture of beauty. Here you have in a most beautiful and full compendium, the sum of the Christian life, expressed in the most concise manner, and which may be very easily impressed upon the memory. And, if thou wouldst not wander aside from the law, but apprehend it fundamentally, so as to know what thou oughtest to do, and what not to do, and not be compelled to run about seeking knowledge here and seeking knowledge there, thou must come to this :—have love flowing out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned ! And when thou hast got this, there stand ; and, out of this, go to and attend on all right sermons ; this is what the leaders of sects and all those over-wise spirits cannot do. The doctrine concerning all kinds of works, borrowed from every quarter, does not fulfil the law. To the fulfilment of the law, there must be the whole that the law requires : and

this is called "charity." And this kind of charity is that which flows forth as water or a stream, and springs out as a fountain from the heart, and is pure, and accompanied with a good conscience and faith unfeigned. And where there is such charity, it is true charity, and the law is fulfilled; but where this charity is not, there is a wandering utterly out of the way of the law.

Now, these are deep words, and truly Paul's words, contain in them a great deal: and therefore, we must in some degree expound them, in order that they may be the more easily understood, and that we may exercise ourselves in this Sermon of his.

FIRST PART.

In the first place: he places the sum of the whole law, or that which comprehends the whole law, in love. And love, (as all I suppose well know,) is nothing more or less than the loving or favouring any one from the heart, and performing and shewing towards such an one every office of friendship and benevolence. Now, the above-mentioned teachers use the same words, preaching and boasting much about love, but all piece by piece, and just as suits their own vain doctrines. So also heretics and the most ungodly and abandoned of men have love, but it is exercised only towards each other, and towards those who are of the same stamp with themselves; but they at the same time persecute and hate all good Christians with utter hatred, and would willingly murder them if they could; but this deserveth not to be called love. For, if I choose out such or such persons whose way of life pleases me and agrees with mine, and if I lovingly and attentively embrace and serve such and none else, that is called "particular love," which by no means flows from a pure heart, but is filthy mire only. For the love that flows from a pure heart, is of this nature—God has commanded me that I should pour forth my love towards my neighbour, and favour all alike and without difference, whether they be friends or enemies; even as our heavenly Father does, who causes his son to arise upon the evil and the good, and thus does

good especially unto those by whom he is blasphemed day and night; yea, even unto those, who basely abuse his gifts unto disobedience, shame, sin, and all ungodliness. And again, he giveth his rain both to the grateful and to the ungrateful; and causeth the earth to bring forth its various benefits, money, wealth, riches, fruits, cattle, &c. more especially for those who are the vilest of men. And from what motive does he this? From that pure love with which his heart so fully abounds. This love he largely diffuses abroad towards all, passing no one by, whether they be good or evil, worthy or unworthy.

And this is called true, divine, right, and perfect love; which passes no one by to choose out another, nor divides or separates itself, but embraces all alike. The other is the love of highwaymen and publicans, if I only love him who serves me and can be of use to me, and who holds me in estimation, while I at the same time cast out him that despises me and is not on my side. For such a love does not proceed from a heart that is thoroughly good and disposed towards all alike, but from a heart that seeks only its own, and is full of the love, not of others, but of itself. Nor does it love any one but with a view to its own advantage, only considering what is to its own profit: seeking its own gain from all, and not the benefit of its neighbour. Such an one smiles when praised and honoured, but, when looked at with an unfavourable countenance, or when some harsh word strikes his ear, he grows sour, reviles and accuses, and all his friendship is immediately at an end.

On the contrary, a "pure heart" must, according to the Word and example of God, be so affected, as to favour and freely bestow on every one the best and most excellent of those things with which God has favoured us, and which his divine love has freely bestowed on us. Therefore, if God can give unto Judas his betrayer, or to the wicked high-priest Caiphas, all things equally with his own dearest disciples, why should not I do the same? For what can I give which he has not before much more bountifully given unto me?

But some one will perhaps say, But he is my enemy; or at least he has done me great evil. But, he is an enemy to God also, and has done much greater evil unto him than ever he can do unto me or thee. Nevertheless, my love is not to be extinguished, or to cease; because he is evil and altogether unworthy of it. If he be evil, he will in his time receive a due reward for all that he has done; but his evil ways shall not overcome my love. And if, through love, I can rebuke and admonish him, or pray for him that he may be made better and escape punishment, I will do it readily. But, to desire to become his enemy, and to do him evil, that must be far from me. And, what advantage should I gain thereby? I shall not become the better by it, and shall only make him the worse. But this may do me good: if I favour him all that I can, if I assist him by my services and he will but suffer me thus to benefit him, if I pray unto God for him; then, I shall be enabled to enjoy a peace in myself, for I have no need to have any strife or contention with any one; and perhaps I may thus do him real good, and he may repent and amend his life. But if I act in the contrary way, with a love or charity divided, and separate, I shall have more bitterness and uneasiness from those whom I hate, than I shall have joy and advantage from those whom I love and regard. And this is making the fountain or the water muddy, (as they say,) whereby the love remains no longer pure. And it is evident; that this is what the Jews did, against whom Paul is here speaking; for they also chose out their persons whom they would love; and therefore, they defiled the purity of love by human affections; and hence, their "heart" could not be "pure."

But by what means is the "heart" made "pure?" I answer: It cannot be purified by any thing more effectually, than by that greatest of all purity, the Word of God! Apprehend that in thy mind, and rule thy life according to it, and thy heart is purified! Thus set before thee the Word in this passage, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' and follow after what this Word commands, and thou wilt soon see whether it will not

purely cleanse thee from all the self-love and self-seeking there is in thee. For when it commands thee to love thy neighbour, it excepts no one, whether friend or enemy. And although any certain one may be a bad man, and may have often done thee evil, yet he has not lost the name of neighbour, but is still so, is still thy flesh and blood, and included in this scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," &c. And therefore, I say, if thou consider him as the Word teaches thee to do, then will thy heart be pure and thy love sincere; and thou wilt have no false respect of persons, nor look upon him in any other way than thou wouldst on one who was a good man and one of thy familiar friends.

But however, we cannot deny it to be true, that a good man is the more lovely object; and that, every one is by nature more inclined towards such an one, than toward the society of bad men; from familiarity with whom, every good man shrinks. This, however, is an effect of flesh and blood, rather than of true and Christian charity. For the Christian is not to love, as the world does, according to the person. For it is thus that a young man is taken with the wit and beauty of a damsel, and that the miser loves and thirsts after money, and the ruler and prince after honour and power, &c. But all such love is called feigned and borrowed, cleaving only unto those good things with which it sees the person adorned, and lasts no longer than that which it loves endures and can be enjoyed. Whereas, this charity, ought to be a perpetually flowing fountain rising from the inmost recesses of the heart; even as a living and continual spring of water, ever flows and can never be stopped nor dried up. For this charity saith,—
 'I do not love thee either for thy goodness or for thy badness, for my spring of love does not flow out of thy goodness, as out of another's fountain, but out of my own fountain; that is, out of the Word which is sown in my heart, by which I am commanded to love my neighbour. Out of this fountain it flows, spreading abroad unto all who have need of it, and watering all, both friends and enemies. Nay, it is more especially

prepared and ready for my enemies; because they have the greater need of it, that they may by my aid be helped out of their sins; and particularly, through the best of all means; that is, by my praying for them, and doing all that lies in my power that they may become good, and may be delivered out of the snares of the devil.' And this is called charity flowing from the heart, and not foreign or put on. For this man finds nothing in his enemy that can excite his love; but, because he is a Christian who apprehends the Word which is perfect purity in itself, his heart is by the indwelling of that Word rendered pure and filled with true charity. Wherefore, he pours forth the treasures of his love towards all, and is neither moved on, nor driven back, by a regard to the person of any, either good or bad.

Behold! this is how all ought to preach who should rightly teach that charity which is required by the law; concerning which, our babblers know nothing at all, nor can they give a reason for any thing which they advance, though they prate so much about the law, and dispute so much about charity. They see not, nor do they once imagine, that charity must be so obtained that it may flow out of the heart, and that the fountain must be first pure and clean. This thought never descended into their hearts, though they hear, read, and teach, so much about charity. They are occupied with mere wandering and unprofitable opinions, or rather, with dead dreams. Wherefore, all things that are preached concerning works and a good life have their excellency, whether it be in respect of circumcision, or fasting, or sacrifice, &c. all is right if it proceed from the Word of God, from a pure heart, and from faith unfeigned. But this spring and fountain there must be, and they must of necessity precede every thing else.

And this fountain-spring you may see exemplified in all conditions of life: for, every one ought to perform the duty laid upon him according to it, and to exercise works of love. The servant who labours and has no other thoughts than these, 'My master pays me wages: and it is for that reason that I do my work, or else I

could not look him in the face,' has not a pure heart; for he only serves for a piece of bread, and when that is taken away, he serves no longer. Whereas, were he a good man and a Christian, his feelings would be these, 'I will not serve my master merely because he pays me wages, or because he is good or bad, &c. but because the Word of God to me is this, "Servants, be obedient unto your masters as unto Christ."'" This man's service flows forth from his heart, because he apprehends and magnifies the Word: saying, 'I will indeed serve my master for wages, but the greatest motive from which I will render my service, shall be this:—that I may thereby serve my God and Lord, Jesus Christ, who has placed me in this servant's condition, which I know to be well-pleasing in his sight,' &c. Here you see a truly good work springing out of a pure heart!

So also a ruler or a prince, or those to whom the charge of administering the government is committed, may think thus.—'God has entrusted to me the office of a magistrate, that I should be a ruler. Now, if I only consider how I may enjoy my dignity, wealth, and power, certain it is that my heart will not be pure. But yet, I may so perform the office of a ruler that the world shall have no cause to complain of me, and neither the king, nor the lawyer with his laws, shall have it in their power to tax me with, or condemn me for, any thing.' And so also a servant, who serves for his wages only, may not be condemned by the world, whether he seek his own profit or not. But, the word of God is not the rule of such a prince, but his own idol, his own glory, his own profit, power, &c. Whereas, if the feelings of his heart were,—'Since I am employed in this office in which God has placed me, and since the Word of God commands him who hath rule to be faithful, it becomes me to execute my office with all fidelity and diligence, to the praise and glory of my God;' the rule of such a prince endued with such a mind, would flow from a pure and sincere heart, wherewith both God and men are delighted.—This is a charity, that is not exercised outwardly to persons and things, but is begotten in the

heart; and that has ever before its eyes the Word of God, which, as it is pure and clean, so it purifies the heart. And thus, the rule of such a prince and his works are pure services of God, and they are most pleasing sacrifices unto him, because they are done according to the Word of God, and so, are done for God's sake only. But such a charity as this, our mere talkers know not how to teach, nor do they know how to show what it is, but make a bawling only, though they are such very excellent teachers that we must become good! They speak forth a certain judicial oration formed out of human laws, just as the king and his learned lawyers would teach. But, *how* the heart can be purified, of that matter they savour and think nothing at all, nor that charity is to be derived from the Word of God, and to flow forth into all states and conditions.

And the same you must say also with respect to spiritual offices and stations.—If I or any other person preach to get a good living in the church, when otherwise I should not preach at all, I may indeed preach the Gospel, but my heart is not pure, but manifestly polluted. Therefore, although I may affirm a thousand times over that the work is good, and the office important, yet, I by no means feel the nature of them, nor do they flow from a pure heart. For then only is the heart pure, when it feels thus.—Although I am to derive my living from hence, yet this is not to be the main motive from which I exercise my office; but, because God has called me to it and committed it unto me that I should perform it faithfully. Wherefore it rests upon me that I devote myself to it with all diligence, to the glory of God, and to the salvation of souls: which I do therefore willingly, and from my heart, from a love of the Word. In all this I seek neither love, nor friendship, nor honours, nor favour from men, but my works flow forth from my heart; which I first do, before any honour, glory, reward, money, or favour, follows;—though these, if they should proceed and follow, I may receive and enjoy without sin.

Thus, behold, the Word is the cause, foundation,

root, fountain, and spring, of that love which flows forth from the heart, and of all those good works that are acceptable unto God; none of which he can bear with, unless the heart be first pure. For those works are not pleasing even unto men, which proceed not from the heart, but are done in dissimulation. And if the king and men require the heart, although they cannot see it, of how much greater price must that heart be, in the sight of God, which doeth all things for the Word's sake. And therefore it is, that he permits his Word to be preached, that we may order the whole of our life according to its rule.—Let us then not suffer ourselves to be murdered, driven away, or disheartened by any obstacle, although we may thereby have to undergo every kind of loss, ingratitude, and contempt; but let us with a firm and courageous mind, wade and struggle through the whole; and say, 'I have done nothing for any man's sake, nor will I omit any thing for any man's sake; but I will do all with a desire to please God, and let all other things remain as and where they will.' In this way it is that men become most honourable, and most valuable, qualified to undertake any offices, and serving God from the greatest promptitude of mind, and from a love unfeigned. For here the fountain and spring are good, and not derived and borrowed from other objects.

These things have I spoken in a brief way concerning the FIRST PART of our subject:—that the heart is purified by the Word only, and not as the monks have dreamed, by a self-war undertaken against evil thoughts, and by a feigned exercise of good thoughts. For what thoughts soever you may form to yourself, the heart will remain impure if the Word of God be not in it, whatever external show of a holy life men may make; as Paul here testifies concerning such. For this purity of which he speaks, has a much wider extent than that external and corporeal purity to which the Jews endeavoured to attain by their frequent purifications, and washing of hands, when they ate or drank; and to which our religious ones would attain by their fasting, distinctions

of garments, orders, rites, &c. It is called the purity of the Spirit: whereby we are instructed, out of the Word of God, how we ought to obey him in all conditions of life.

SECOND PART.

Now follows the second part of our subject, wherein we are to treat of “a good conscience:”—that charity must flow from such a heart, as is attended with a conscience that is joyful and peaceful both toward God and toward man. With respect to men, it must be such a conscience as Paul had, when he glories, that he so lived, that he hurt no one, injured no one, and was a bad example and burthen to no one; and that all who had seen and heard him must bear witness, that he served all, helped all, consulted the good of all, and was kind to all alike. In such a conscience did Moses also glory against the rebellious, Numbers xvi. “I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.” In the same did Jeremiah also glory, chap. xviii. “Remember, O Lord, that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and turn away thy wrath from them.” And so did Samuel, 1 Sam. xii. “I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any thing to blind mine eyes therewith?” &c.—Unto such glorying and boasting must every Christian attain. He must so live towards all men, and so exercise and shew forth his love, that no one may have just cause to complain of any thing in which he has had his conscience disturbed, or been filled with fear; and that all who would speak the truth, may be compelled to confess and to declare, that he has so lived, that he has set before all an example of holy life, if they choose to imitate it: and in this he may glory before both God and man. This is called “a good conscience” before men: or against the false complaints of men.

And, although such a conscience cannot stand before the judgment of God; even as that before-mentioned purity of heart does not consist in the external life and works of love, (for we all still remain sinners before God,) yet, unto such an heart we must attain, that we may be enabled to comfort ourselves before him and say,—God has enjoined and commanded this to be done: therefore I do it with a pure heart, and with a good conscience: nor would I willingly do otherwise, or injure or hurt any one designedly: but, whatever I do shall be that which is ordained and commanded of God. This confidence let no Christian suffer to be wrested from him: so that he may glory in himself through the Word of God against the whole world: for he who has no certain principle according to which he may direct his life, so as to be enabled to stop the mouths of all accusers, and to clear and vindicate himself before all, as having lived, spoken, and done justly, he is not yet a Christian, as not having in himself a pure heart, and true charity! For, as to our so believing the doctrine of faith, that while we hold it, we may do as we please, whether it shall be for the advantage or disadvantage of our enemy, that religion is of no avail. For in this way the doctrine would be of that tendency, as to give us the licence and impunity of doing what we please. Whereas, what we are to attain unto, is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, so that no one may have it in his power to accuse us of any evil doing.

Although, however, these things have been said concerning our life, and works, and although a Christian is another man before God, as we shall hereafter hear, yet are we to strive with all our powers unto this—that we may be blameless in the sight of God. And wherein we come short in this, we are to flee unto prayer, and to say before both God and men, ‘Forgive us our trespasses:’ so that our life may remain blameless before men, and may be attended with a good conscience. And if this cannot be done in perfect love and purity of heart, let it at least be done in humility; and

let us beg and entreat the pardon of our faults from all, where we have not done, or cannot do, exactly as we ought: so that our neighbour may be compelled to say, 'Although thou hast wronged me in no common way, and although thou hast not served me enough and as thou oughtest to have done, yet, because thou humblest thyself, I will willingly pardon thee, and will receive thee into my favour and confidence; and, because of thy humility, I will pronounce thee a good man: seeing that thou dost not obstinately persist as though thou wishedst to injure me, but turnest thyself unto charity.'

Thus, that life is still unblameable which is accompanied with humility and amended, although it was subject to blame; so that no one can justly complain of it. And it is thus that the law ought to be explained and handled: whereby, charity may be rightly exercised toward all out of a pure heart, for God's sake, and may be accompanied with a good conscience before the world. And this is what ought to be set forth by those vain babblers in their sermons, to the rejection and explosion of all their cold and futile vanities and dreams.—But that all these things may stand and avail in the sight of God, something else is still requisite: namely, that which follows—

And of faith unfeigned.

For, as I have already observed, although I may have a good conscience before men, and may exercise charity out of a pure heart, yet the old Adam, that is, flesh and blood which are still under sin, remain in me, which prevent my being wholly sanctified and pure: and as Paul saith, Gal. vi. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," &c.: and again, Rom. vii. he affirms, that he hath to wage a continual war against himself, because he cannot do the good that he would, though he fain would do it. The spirit indeed would most willingly live purely and perfectly, according to the Word of God, but its fervent desire is resisted by its deadly enemy the flesh; which is ever besetting us with many and great

temptations, to seek glory, honour, wealth, riches, and days of ease, and to become slothful and negligent in our station and office.

Hence, there remains a perpetual conflict within us, on account of the impurity of our person; in which there are not yet found a sincere purity, a good conscience, and perfect love; (excepting what there may appear to be before men;) for before God, many things are found wanting, many things are subject to reproof, although all may be perfect before men.—For example: Although David attained unto that confidence before men, that no one could accuse him; and although the holy prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, &c. gloried, and were confident, that whatever they had done in the discharge of their office, was done rightly, and well: seeing that it was the Word and command of God, in which they exercised themselves with a pure heart and with a good conscience; yet, they could not stand in this confidence before God, but were compelled to say—If thou shouldst enter into judgment with us, then none of us shall have so good a conscience, and so pure a heart, who will not tremble at thy judgment and acknowledge himself guilty. For God has reserved unto himself that prerogative of bringing in and finding every one guilty, be he as great a saint as he may. Nor is there a saint so holy, whom he could not condemn and judge worthy of destruction. Wherefore, although before men thy heart may be pure, and thy conscience good; yet art thou to consider, that the same must be good also in the sight of God, so that they cannot be condemned; and may be safe and secure from his judgment, as well as in the sight of men.—And unto this pertains our *third part*; namely, faith!

THIRD PART.

And this is the principal part, and the chief precept, which embraces in itself all the rest: that we may know, that where there is not perfect love, nor a truly pure heart, nor a peaceful conscience, and where God finds much to condemn, but where the world can find nothing

to condemn, there faith must be yet added; and such a faith as is unfeigned, and unadulterated by a trusting in its own righteousness. For wheresoever this faith is not, there the heart is never pure before God, nor can the conscience stand, when they shall be examined with strict judgment and penetrating trial. Men, indeed, shall not have it in their power to bring any thing against me, when I shall glory that I have served them in preaching, in aiding, in ruling, and presiding over them, with all fidelity. And if I have done any thing above or short of what I ought, I am sorry for it from my heart, for I would willingly have done every thing as I ought. And therefore, I am confident in myself, and stand acquitted; nor have they any thing farther that they can justly demand of me, but are all compelled to give me a full discharge. But, I have also to attain unto this:—that I may have a pure heart, and a good conscience before God, so that he shall not in any way accuse or condemn me: and this we find not in ourselves, though we may have somewhat to glory of in that respect before men.

Therefore, I must here attain unto a something higher, to which I may trust when I shall come into peril, and within ‘gunshot’ (as they say;) and I must say to my fearful and trembling conscience, I have indeed done what I could, but who can tell how often he doth less than what he ought? For I cannot see and know all things; even as David saith, Psalm xxi. “Who can understand his errors.” Hence, I can build no foundation of confidence upon my own holiness and purity. I have indeed a clear knowledge of the Word,—so live, so love, and have a good conscience, which is pure and holy. But here is where I fall short;—I cannot conclude that that Word is in my heart, nor do find in myself so good a conscience as the Word requires of me. Nor is there a man living upon earth, who can with confidence say, I know that I have done all things, and that I owe nothing before God. But even the greatest of saints, must say, I have indeed done all that

lay in my power, but I have erred much oftener than I have any knowledge of.

Hence, our own conscience witnesseth against us, accusing us and proving us to be impure, even while we are, before the world, quite free from any possibility of accusation. For the Word will here come in, Thou oughtest to have done this, and this thou oughtest to have left undone. The judgment of this Word no one can escape, nor answer its accusations; but is compelled to stand in uncertainty upon the smallest matters, and in all the perplexity of hesitation. And as soon as he begins to doubt, that moment he becomes impure; for, he standeth not before God, but flees and trembles.

WHEREFORE, here must come in to our help the grand point of our doctrine: namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ, being sent of the Father, came into the world and suffered and died for us: whereby, having appeased the wrath of the Father, he restored unto us his good-will and favour, and now sits at the right hand of the Father as our Advocate and Saviour, and as a continual Mediator, interceding for us by his prayers, as being those who have not and cannot attain unto, of ourselves, such a purity and good conscience. Thus therefore, by his help and benefits, we are enabled to say before God, Although I am not pure, and have not a good conscience, yet I cleave unto Christ by faith, who has a perfect purity and a good conscience which he puts down for me; yea, rather, giveth unto me. Seeing that he only it is, concerning whom it is recorded and to be read in Peter, and Isaiah lv. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And this glory belongeth only unto him; nor has he any need to pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' &c. nor any need of that article of the Creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' &c. but he is free and secure in an everlasting, pure, and full righteousness: to whom no man can lay any evil action, and whose conscience no one can accuse of any sin, neither man nor devil, no, nor even God himself: for he is himself God, and cannot accuse himself.

And this is the faith, that is called unadulterated and unfeigned, which, in the midst of a struggling and trembling conscience, hath boldness to go into the presence of God; and say, 'Thou greatest and most blessed God, before the world, indeed, I am innocent and confident of mind, so that no one can bring against me any accusation, nor condemn me. And although I have not done all things, yet I ask forgiveness of every one, that for God's sake he would forgive me even as I forgive all. In this way I have answered the complaint of all, so that none have any farther demand upon me. But before thee I must lay aside this confidence, and must altogether acknowledge myself guilty of innumerable sins, and say, as David said in the 145th Psalm, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Therefore, I cannot contend with thee also when thou shalt require an account of my life. But I fly from the tribunal to the atoning sacrifice. Before the tribunal of the world, I willingly submit to be arraigned according to the law, and I will answer for myself and will do what I can. But before thee I cannot stand in judgment, but beg thy grace, which I will seek to obtain in every possible way. For the scriptures teach me, that God has appointed two seats of appeal unto men. The one, a judgment-seat for those who are still secure and high-minded, and are unwilling to acknowledge and confess their sins. The other, a mercy-seat for miserable and trembling consciences which feel their sins and tremble at the judgment of God, and have earnest desires after grace. And this mercy-seat is Christ, as Paul witnesseth, Rom. viii. "whom God hath set forth," that we might flee unto him for refuge, when we feel that we cannot stand before God in our own strength. Unto this I also will betake myself, if I have or shall come short in what I ought to do; (and my sins against the law are far greater than my holiness and righteousness;) and whatever goodness of conscience or purity before men I may have, I will have all to be nothing and out of sight; and I will have my conscience fortified with

this bulwark, or rather beautiful heaven, which is called grace and the remission of sins, which shall powerfully support and defend it. And under the overshadowing wings of these, will I comfort my heart and conscience, and remain in perfect safety. For Christ himself has commanded it to be preached and proclaimed abroad, that all who believe shall have remission of sins in his name. And also, that whosoever shall believe and be baptized shall be saved. And John, chap. iii. saith, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." —God himself, therefore, has set before us his mercy-seat, and leads unto it from his judgment-seat. Let us then leave others before his judgment-seat; that is, those proud holy ones, who despise and persecute the Word of God, and they shall there receive that sentence which their deeds have merited. Let us leave them to remain in their own place, until they also shall have humbled themselves. But we will not remain in their place, but will depart from it as far as is possible for us to do, and will come into the place of the mercy-seat, to which only we will appeal.

Moreover, it is not a mere dream of our own brain, but his own Word, that a horrible judgment awaits those who come in their own holiness, and, relying on that, hope that they shall be able to stand before God the Judge, without fleeing to Christ the mercy-seat. For the sentence is already decreed, that they shall stand before the judgment-seat; as Christ saith, John iii. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on him shall not come into condemnation:" that is, he shall not come before the judgment-seat, but unto the mercy-seat, where there is no wrath burning or existing, but where all is grace and the forgiveness of sins; where all is pardoned that is not pure, yea, where all sin is blotted out and taken out of the way, as a drop of water is dried up out of sight by the heat of the sun. For where the mercy-seat

reigneth, there is nothing else but pardon and the remission of sins.

WHEREFORE, my mind is this, — that a clear distinction is ever to be held between the law and the Gospel; which I never cease to teach and enforce. The law drags us to the judgment-seat, requiring from us holiness of life, and charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience: and it moreover requires this, — that we continue to exercise ourselves therein; but it can go no farther. But when it comes unto thee and accuses thee, bringing thee to an account, and requiring of thee those things which it has power to demand, then tumults will take place: for although thou mayest have done this and that, yet thou canst not stand before God, at whose judgment-seat many things will yet be found wanting which thou oughtest to have done but hast left undone, nor are they even known to thyself. Here, which way wilt thou turn thyself? The law presses thee on every side, and thou condemnest thyself by the judgment of thy own conscience, and callest down upon thyself the sentence of the Judge. And here thou must fall into despair, nor hast thou any other place of wisdom to flee into, nor is there any other possibility of help, unless thou know how to flee from the judgment-seat unto the mercy-seat. For example: if any bishop should die in his own sanctity, who, while he lived was a man of a very holy life, and should know nothing of Christ but as a cruel judge, (as he has ever hitherto been preached among us and never otherwise set forth, and as he really is to such persons, but not so in reality in his own nature, for in reality he is nothing but mere grace and consolation, but they conceive of him in their own hearts quite the reverse,) behold such an one stands in the way of himself, and prevents himself from attaining unto any grace. Nor can any one rescue him from this his blindness, and teach him rightly concerning Christ, for he knows no distinction between the judgment-seat and the mercy-seat: nay, he is so utterly ignorant of the mercy-seat, that he must wander directly away from it, and remain fixed to the judgment-seat.

Whereas, we teach, that Christ is so to be learned and beheld, as sitting before the miserable and trembling consciences that believe in him, not as an angry judge commanding the guilty to be dragged immediately to punishment, but as a merciful, lovely, and comforting Mediator between my trembling conscience and God, saying unto mo, 'If thou art a sinner and art in dismay, and the devil is trying to drag thee to the judgment-seat; then, flee unto me and have no fear of wrath. And why? Behold I sit here for this purpose;—that if thou wilt believe in me, I will intercede for thee before the Father, so that no anger or displeasure can hurt thee; for all wrath and punishment will be sooner lost in me than it can be borne by thee; which indeed cannot be borne by thee at all.'—For he is the only begotten Son in whom all grace dwells: and whenever the Father looks on him, he cannot but fill all heaven and earth with his favour, and forget all his anger. And whatever he asks of the Father he immediately obtains without denial.

Thus are we by faith rendered wholly blessed, happy, and safe, no longer subject to any condemnation; not however on account of our own holiness and purity, but through and by Christ, to whom we cleave by faith as our mercy-seat; being fully persuaded, that there can be no wrath in him, but grace only, and love, and the pardon and remission of sins. In this way is the heart purified before God, and the conscience made good, and safely peaceful; not by its having any respect to its own purity or manner of life before the world, but by its trusting in that blessed treasure which it apprehends in its heart, which is its surety and full discharge, when it cannot pay what it owes before God.

BUT since the whole matter lies in this, let us examine ourselves again and again, that our faith be not false, or as Paul saith, feigned. For if our faith be wrong and false, all is wrong. For in every age and time there have been not a few, even as there are many in this day, who can talk a great deal about faith, desiring to be teachers, not only of the law, but of the Gospel

also: who say as we do, that faith doth and accomplish th all things, but say moreover, that the law and good works must be added thereto; and that, if these be not added, the faith is of no avail. Whereby, they mingle our life and works, and Christ together, and confound them. But this is not teaching faith purely and sincerely, but it is colouring, polluting, and adulterating faith; so that it no longer can be called faith, but a feigned, hypocritical, and outside show of faith; wherein, the confidence is not a relying on Christ as the only mercy-seat, but a trust placed in our own holiness, as being able to stand before the judgment-seat of God. And therefore, upon these grounds we are most justly rejected of God, and condemned to that perdition which we righteously deserve.

Wherefore, if faith must be pure and free from every thing feigned and hypocritical, then, these two things, Christ and my works, are to be clearly and rightly distinguished. This then is manifest even unto the most blind:—that Christ and his works, are not my life and works, but are wholly separate and distinct from the law, and the life of all men whatever, and at a much greater distance than the life of one man is separate from that of another. For I cannot say that I, and the King, and the Pope are one and the same person, and yet I am much nearer and much more like unto them, as being a mortal man and a sinner, than unto Christ the Lord, who is not only a perfectly pure and holy man, free from all defilement, and without spot, but moreover, God. Therefore, let the law and thy purity of heart, and also thy good conscience avail only before the world. But into the presence of that mercy-seat which is at the right hand of the Father, and who is the Mediator between thee and God, no works or merits of man can be admitted, much less can they stand before him. Wherefore, Christ is to be clearly separated from all my life, deeds, and works; and I am, without exception, to conclude, that he is a something wholly distinct from my life lived with a pure heart and a good conscience before men, be it as perfect and as blameless

as it may. For if this be brought before God, and led by the law to his judgment-seat, I am condemned and undone. But Christ as the mercy-seat, and all those who cleave unto him by faith, cannot be judged and condemned.

Thus, all my life, together with the law and the judgment-seat, stand separate on the one side, where I and all the saints stand suffering ourselves to be judged and condemned. And then, I am by my faith to flee away afar and betake myself unto the other side, and cleave unto him who is pure and has no sin, and concerning whom the scripture saith, "He that believeth in him shall not be confounded." Because, he is in the presence of the Father, there sitting and interceding for me, and "speaking well." And, moreover, he freely gives me his purity and holiness, that, being covered and adorned with these, I may be able to stand before God the Father; with whom, all wrath and indignation are done away, and in their stead, nothing but love and grace flowing forth upon me.

BEHOLD it is thus that faith remains pure and unfeigned: for it does not centre in my works, as though God should have mercy upon me on their account, for that is what the false and feigned faith imagines to itself; which mingles and confounds my works and merits with the grace of God, and which, though it holds Christ in words, yet has the confidence of its heart centred in itself; and thus it is certain, that such a feigned faith cannot hold its confidence long; for at last the matter will come to this;—that, going on to believe that God will be merciful unto thee on account of thy blamelessly spent life, thou wilt at last be driven to despair and to say,—who strictly knows how thou hast lived? How wilt thou be assured that nothing has been left by thee undone through negligence, and that nothing is wanting in thee? Hence, by his hesitating, uncertainty of mind, thy whole foundation is destroyed, and like a heap of sand tumbles under thy feet, and thy faith falls prostrate to the ground.

Hence, it is not ~~un~~appropriately called feigned and

coloured faith; seeing that, it is a faith which beholds things as through a painted glass or transparency; by which means, the things beheld appear to be of the same colour as the glass, when they are in reality not of the same colour. So these men, believe that the nature of God is such, that he will deign to look on our works and merits: and thus do they set him forth according to their opinions and dreams, which are in themselves false and rash. And thus they judge of God and all things accordingly as they see him through their transparency. But thou wilt then behold him with pure and right eyes, if thou make a clear distinction between the judgment-seat and mercy-seat; whereby, the heaven of grace and of the remission of sins obtained by the Mediator, remains pure with its stars, where Christ reigns with his works, and the earth also is kept distinct with its trees and grass, to which we with our works belong.

This, I say, is the point to which things must be brought, if we desire to stand before God in a right and unfeigned faith: — we are to separate between our life and Christ or the mercy-seat. And he who will not do this, but will with a presumptuous mind bring himself before the mercy-seat, he shall feel the reward of his temerity. I myself also was once in that perilous state, but, like a mouse that had tasted pitch, I fled for my life, thinking that I should be the happiest of men, if it should but be given unto me to come unto the mercy-seat. And now I am compelled to say, that although I have lived a good life before men, yet, all things that are the contrary to it have been committed by me; and that therefore, I leave the whole at the judgment-seat of God to be punished according to his will. And I have no other consolation, no other help or hope of salvation, than that Christ my mercy-seat, who never sinned, who never was defiled with iniquity, who died for me and rose again, now sits at the right hand of the Father, and covers me with the overshadowing wings of his protection; so that I doubt not, that through his benefits and intercession, I am safe before God, and delivered from all wrath and terror of judgment. Thus, faith

sets nothing before itself to trust in rashly, but remains pure in all things by resting in Christ alone.

The man that shall rightly understand this, shall be a man of an upright heart. For all others deal in a feigned faith: they boast indeed a great deal of faith, but they confound all things together, just as liquor-venders mingle water with wine, when they say, 'If thou live thus, and thus, God will be merciful unto thee;' and they make of the mercy-seat a judgment-seat; and, on the contrary, of the judgment-seat a mercy-seat. Which can by no means be done, for the judgment-seat must remain a judgment-seat, &c. Wherefore, separate these as widely asunder as possible, that they come not near together: that is, set thy life and holiness, together with the judgment-seat on one side, which compels and forces thee to have a good conscience and blameless life before the world and men; but, offer thy sins on the other side, before the mercy-seat, and there leave them, and there God will receive thee in the most loving manner, and will embrace thee with open arms as a beloved son, and will never more remember any wrath or sins for ever!

If such a doctrine as this concerning faith were set before men, then would things be done well, and all the rest would in consequence follow—purity of heart, goodness of conscience, and perfect and abounding charity. For he that is established and settled in heart by faith, who knows that God has a favour towards him, and is not angry with him, although he deserves his anger on many accounts,—such an one does all things with a happy and willing mind. And moreover, he so lives towards men, that he loves and is ready to serve all, although they may themselves not be at all worthy of his love.—And with respect to God, he is, through Christ the Mediator, safe and happy; who will not now cast him into hell, but lovingly smiles upon him, and raises him up into heaven. And this is the greatest of all safety, and is the substance and foundation of our salvation. And moreover, I go forth in my life towards my neighbour, and do the best and all that I can for him,

and whatever my condition in life or office may require and demand of me. And where I may fall short, I anticipate my neighbour, and ask pardon for my negligence before God and before men, so that, no opportunity shall be given either to him or to the world, of charging me with any thing; and all power of swallowing me up shall be taken from hell, and all power of plucking me away taken from the devil.

Thus is the man said to be perfect in all things: before men, by love; and before God, not by the law, but through Christ apprehended by faith, as a mercy-seat: who gives his holiness to them that believe, and pardons them, so that in him they have all things that are necessary unto salvation.

THIS is the right and pure doctrine, which ought to be exercised in and set forth clearly unto men: that they may know how they may stand both before God and before men, that faith and charity be not confounded, nor the life brought indiscriminately both before God and men. And this is how those self-glorying and arrogant stripling-teachers ought to set things forth, (if they will be teachers of the law,) in order that there may be a clear distinction between the law and faith made before all men.

And, even though these things should be set forth and enforced with the greatest diligence, yet much difficulty remains before they will be rightly apprehended. And it is more particularly so with us who have been nurtured and trained up in the doctrine of works, and led only unto the law and to our own works. To this also is added our nature, which is of itself prone and inclined to this very thing; so that it has become a fixed habit, and is thereby the more confirmed, and has by length of time brought the heart even into a settled custom and use; so that we cannot refrain, nor otherwise think, than that God will certainly be merciful unto me who have done so many good works, and have lived so blamelessly. Hence, we have to fight both against nature and habit. And it is indeed a most arduous struggle to get into another mind, and to distinguish

purely faith and charity, even when we are in the faith; seeing that the old mud still sticks and cleaves close to us; so that our heart can scarcely refrain from saying, 'I have taught the Gospel for so long, I have so lived, and I have done so many and great good works,' &c. And we are ever willing to close in with our heart, and assent to its looking on our life, and turning the mercy-seat of God into a judgment-seat for our sakes. And before men indeed you may thus glory, 'I have done in all things as well as I could, and if I have come short in any thing, I am even now ready to make it up.' But if thou wilt approach unto God, I should advise thee to cease from all this arrogant boasting, and think of fleeing from judgment and appealing unto grace.

Let him that will, try and enter upon the beginning of this matter, and he shall soon see and experience, how hard and difficult a matter it is, for a man who has passed all his life in works of great holiness, to leave the whole, and cleave with his whole heart through faith unto this Mediator only. I myself have now preached the Gospel for nearly twenty years, and have assiduously devoted myself to reading and writing upon faith, and may justly seem to have emerged from this false opinion. Yet even now, at times, I feel that old mire sticking to my heart; under the influence of which, I would willingly so act towards God, as to take something with me in my hand to him, for the sake of which he should give me grace according to my righteousness. And scarcely can I be brought, to commit myself with all confidence to mere grace only. And yet it must be so, and cannot be otherwise. The mercy-seat must stand and prevail alone, (seeing that he has set himself before us as the only refuge,) or no one shall ever be saved.

Hence, it is no wonder if it is a hard matter unto others thus purely to apprehend faith, and more especially so, if those same persons are still hindered and perplexed by devilish preachers, such as those of whom Paul speaks, who cry out against the doctrine of faith,

and thus enforce the works of the law, ‘ Do this and thou shalt live.’ And again, ‘ If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,’ &c. Which things are indeed true and right, if thou do but understand them rightly. But the true sense of these words must be explained unto me: for if I know not the real meaning of those parts where I am enjoined to be righteous and to keep the commandments, how am I to attain unto it? Or how am I to know what it is to be righteous? If you say, it is to have a pure heart and a good conscience, and to do all that God commands, you say well. But, my friend, perform thou that thyself first, or at least shew me the man who can say he has performed it: for thou wilt not so purify my heart for me by thy doctrine that God shall not be able to accuse and condemn me. The law (as I have abundantly shewn before) requires such a pure heart, as is attended with a good conscience before God. But by what means do we attain unto such a good conscience? Here is the question, and this is the point upon which our whole controversy turns. This conscience is not attained unto, by thy preaching about the judgment-seat, that is the law, but by our having a pure and unfeigned faith which apprehendeth Christ, in whom it obtains a fulness of all things which the law requireth. Thus, all things are performed by thee, when thou hast attained unto a good conscience, seeing that thou art now become righteous and justified before God. For although many things are wanting in thee, yet Christ stands as thy advocate; who has such a fulness of righteousness, as can fill up thy defects and the defects of all men.

Thus do we point out the way, whereby we may become righteous before God, while those others only shew the way of obtaining that honesty and righteousness which avail before men, which indeed they teach well enough; but they contend, that this same ought to avail before God; and thus, confound all things together, with a greater hodge-podge than ever was made by any cook, because they have had no experience in these matters, and know not what they say, nor whereof they

affirm. For what avails all that perpetual bawling of thine, that ‘if a man would enter into life he must keep the commandments,’ &c.? by uttering which words, thou wilt point out nothing of the way wherein righteousness is to be attained. For if thou descend a little into thyself, and examine thyself strictly, thou wilt find that thou wast originally conceived and born in sin, and hast lived in the same, and that thou canst not perform that which the law demands. Why then dost thou with vain words deceive others, saying, ‘Be thou righteous and thou shalt be saved?’ From which no profit whatever can be derived, there being no mention made of the way by which we attain unto righteousness. Here again thou wilt say unto me, ‘But good works must be done!’—Right! But how am I to stand in the divine judgment, even if I have wrought many good works and for a long time, and have been righteous before men, as you have taught me to be? for how shall I be assured that I am equally righteous in the sight of God? Because, my heart and conscience will rise up and testify to the contrary against me.

But thou oughtest so to teach me as Paul every where teaches, that righteousness is to proceed from a faith unfeigned, and that, before all things, the mercy-seat is to be apprehended, whereby all those deficiencies that are found in us are to be supplied. And then these words, ‘Keep the commandments of God,’ will be rightly understood. For the law requires of thee a perfect righteousness, that will avail before God as well as before men. When thou hast attained unto this, then go forth unto the assembly and among the multitude of men, in the exercise of charity and the performance of good works. By this order of things, every thing is rendered effectual, and the above-mentioned commands of the scripture are fulfilled. For thus, the man does what the law requires. First, before God: not indeed by his own strength or goodness, but through Christ, without whom we can do nothing acceptable before God. And then, by his own good works before men. And now he is perfectly righteous: internally, by faith

in Christ; and externally, by his own works; but so, that there remain a place for a mutual pardon from one man to another. Therefore, the righteousness of Christians stands much more in the remission of sins, than in any works of their own. But this order of things those vainly prating talkers have utterly perverted, and enforce works only, without making any mention of the remission of sins.

But, behold, the apostle Paul thus strikes at the error and ignorance of those, who thus boast of the law and enforce it by their perpetual preaching; and yet, at the same time, having themselves no knowledge of nor shewing at all the way in which the law is to be satisfied; understanding nothing whatever of the matter, and only prating and bawling again and again, that the law and the commandments are to be kept; and saying, ‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,’ &c. And thus, at this day, all books are filled with this scum, and nothing else is vomited out in any of the sermons that are heard but this vainly prated stuff, of which they themselves understand nothing. And it is concerning such that Paul is here speaking; for such, never bring forth one word about the sum of the Christian doctrine; that is, *how* charity is to flow out of a pure heart attended with a good conscience and faith unfeigned. All they say, is, ‘Keep the commandments.’ But, though they are ever aiming at the mark, they never hit it: and therefore, they adulterate and falsify charity, heart and conscience. They utterly leave out the main point of the whole matter, namely, “faith unfeigned;” whereas, if that be not right and pure, all things must of necessity be adulterated whereby one can attain unto righteousness and stand therein. Hence, whatever they teach is a mere bugbear, and bordering upon juggling; and not at all unlike those things which are looked at through a coloured glass, which appear to be of the same colour as the glass, but in reality are not so. And they imagine that they are viewed of God in the same way, and that they appear unto him as they have lived before men: which, as it appears unto them,

has been righteously. But if such were the way with God, then he might have kept Christ and the Gospel to himself. For what necessity would there have been for his sending Christ from heaven, to obtain for us that by his precious blood, which we already had in ourselves, and could bring unto him? And surely he would be the most foolish of all mortals, who should uselessly give away a most precious treasure which nobody needed.

Hence, you see how these men teach their own dreams, concerning which they themselves know nothing certainly, nor have had any experience therein, and do nothing else but fill men with errors, not being able to shew *how* that to which they exhort is to be obtained. They drag indeed men unto works, and thereby leave them confirmed in their original nature and habits, from which they ought to be delivered. And such are indeed pestiferous and detestable characters, and are justly accused and condemned by Paul in the severest manner. And it appears that those, with reference to whom Paul spake, were men of no common authority and estimation, seeing that he says of them, that they wished to be called and considered teachers of the law, and greater and above the apostles themselves.

Wherefore, are we to take diligent heed that we hold fast this text, and lay it up in the secret recesses of our hearts: for it is most signally expressed, and contains the pure and perfect doctrine:—how we are to be righteous both before God and men as the law requires, and to embrace in our experience these three things in one bond, as it were, — a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. And it is from all these things that our life flows, and in these it consists and stands; and it is thus that we satisfy and fulfil the law. But we are first of all most carefully to take heed, that we bring Christ unto the law, who is the end and perfection thereof, and is our righteousness and fulness before God; which we cannot find in ourselves, and never can attain unto, but by faith. And how much soever the law may be enforced and set forth in any

other way, it is all without knowledge or understanding.—Let it suffice for the present, to have thus spoken upon this passage by way of exposition.

SERMON IX.

A SERMON OF CONSOLATION ON THE COMING OF CHRIST AND THE SIGNS THAT SHALL PRECEDE THE LAST DAY.

LUKE xxi.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth, distress of nations through perplexity, &c.

IN the Gospel for to-day, Christ our Lord gives us a particular declaration of the state of things that there shall be in the world, when the end thereof shall be at hand. Whence we may be instructed as to the time when that great and terrible day shall be near, when our Lord Jesus Christ shall openly come himself unto judgment; so that we may not be compelled to remain in doubt, nor to fluctuate through any uncertain opinions. Nay, he plainly tells us the particular signs which shall be in that latter time, and which shall usher in that great day. And indeed, it is not likely that so great an event as the signal and ultimate change of all things, should not be marked with many and great signs, when the much less important changes in countries and kingdoms take place according to predicted signs.

But, as this Gospel has already been copiously set forth before, so that it is well understood by all, and many are fully acquainted with it, I shall not here speak of the doctrine which it contains, but shall treat

of it in another way, to the glory of God and our consolation. For it is to that end published abroad by preaching, and committed to writing, that it may serve and be for a consolation to the faith and hope of us who preach Christ, and of us who believe in him. And although it is calculated to alarm that scum of the rest of mankind whom the signs are intended to awaken, yet, such is its nature, that they are not moved by those signs, but look upon them with an unconcerned security of mind. Wherefore, we shall pay no regard to them, but leave them to our God and their judge who is to come, and who will render unto them their reward; so that they shall feel, in their own external experience, what it is that they would not regard or believe. We however, ourselves, will make this Gospel administer to our profit, by so treating of it, as that it may be to us a sweet and gladdening sermon, and may not be left recorded in vain, nor lose its power and virtue.

And of this consolation we have abundant need; because, it is evident that the signs themselves are sufficiently terrible, and exhibit an alarming sight; and moreover, real Christians are of themselves extremely fearful, and of little courage; whom, when even beholding any examples of the indignation of God, the sound of a leaf may strike almost dead with fear. Whereas, the ungodly are by these things rendered the more secure, and the more hardened; being such, whom no signs, however great and alarming, can move. And this is indeed a lamentable reversion of things. For those to whom these signs ought especially to be a source of gladness, are filled with fear because of them: whereas, those whom God threatens by those signs, have feelings of horn and hearts of stone. Whence it comes to pass, that they cause no concern, and appear to be of no concern to them, to whom all things that speak of and threaten the future wrath and impending indignation of God belong; while, on the other hand, those, who ought not to be alarmed at these signs, but should rather rejoice on account of them, as being messengers not of wrath, but of grace only and consolation,

are wrongly filled with fear by them, and are with difficulty brought to raise their hearts to the conception of those joyful and consolatory thoughts which they ought to entertain.

There are, in this Gospel, TWO THINGS to be observed by us. First: that Christ enumerates in order those signs that shall precede the last day, and by which it may be known that it is even at the doors. Secondly: that he predicts those signs for the consolation of his Christians, to the intent that they may expect his coming with a gladly waiting and happy mind.

FIRST PART.

The first sign, then, which he says shall appear, shall be from heaven in the moon and stars: that is, as he himself explains it, Matt. xxiv. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." And then that there shall be "in the earth distress of nations." With such perplexity shall men be filled, that they shall not know which way to turn themselves, or where to remain, but shall melt away with fear. And moreover, there shall be signs beheld in the sea and in the waters. So that all the creatures and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and the earth shall quake; as an old building, threatening to fall, afterwards utterly gives way and drags its ruins along with it. So that, a something strikingly awful shall forewarn, that the world will soon come to an end, and that the last day is even at the door.

Again, before the last day of judgment, there will be many men whom the devil will drive and torture by an evil conscience and by dire temptations, and will press them into such straits, that they shall not know which way to turn or where to abide. But let the devil thus vex and terrify, yet shall he not hurt those, who are such as God never intended to alarm or condemn like the wicked and ungodly, but who are of a fearful and tender mind, and would willingly receive consolation and be converted, and who can find no comfort or counsel, but as God himself delivers them out of their afflictions of

conscience, and comforts them by his Word.—But do thou fear and take heed to thyself, who, with such security and delight, despiseth all those things by which God threatens thee !

Unto this sign pertains that which Christ here saith also—that men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: that is, many shall be troubled in heart, and shall go about as though death-struck with alarm, and having a foretaste of the evils to come, under the fear of which, their hearts shall fail them, and they shall melt away with the greatness of the trouble and sorrow; even as great distress is wont to destroy the natural body, and as a hidden consumption drinks up the marrow out of the bones; as the wise man saith in the Proverbs.

And such signs as these are to be deeply felt, not on account of what they are in themselves, but much more especially on account of what they are unto thee. For if thou despise them, thou shalt feel them much more awfully hereafter: not, however, the signs themselves, but those things which are pre-signified by them: that is, everlasting terror, trembling, pain, and hell fire. For if these signs are to be borne by the righteous upon earth, and to be felt externally and temporally, what shall we say will be borne by those on whose account the signs are given, and whom God especially warns by them? By which, however, they are are not in the least moved, but only become worse, and will do so until they experience what is meant by them; for they only rejoice while the just are grieved and in sorrow.

It is, indeed, a most trying thing to behold such awful and terrible signs, which fill the minds even of many ungodly men with great fear, (as Christ here saith,) at the sight of which they are seized with trouble; and indeed it is by no means a consoling sight. But, if thou be a Christian, look neither at the external appearance of these signs, nor at that which thou thyself feelest, but look at the necessity of thyself and of the whole world. For as to myself, unless that day should at last come, I should wish I had never been born. And if

thou for awhile lay aside every other care, and consider in thy mind what is the present face of things, thou wilt see how it fares with us and with the Gospel in the world which so cruelly persecutes us while driven about by the devil, and so illiberally despises and scorns us; which rises up against us with such curses, reproaches, criminations, and insults, and mocks us with such bitter taunts and geers; which so ungratefully returns our kindnesses, and rages against us with such hostile, virulent, and bitter hatred. Thou wilt see, moreover, with what a number of ungodly, deceitful, and lying men we are surrounded from without and from within; from whom we have to suffer daily violence, injury, rapine, and theft; and so much so, that no trace of discipline, of reverence, of fear, of punishment, or of good morals, is to be seen; and the more men know of the doctrine of the Word of God, the worse they daily become, and will suffer no check or reproof in even a humanly becoming manner, but spurn it with indignation. Therefore, we receive no other reward for preaching the Gospel, than derision, mockery, and diabolical hatred; which is to Christians bitter indeed, and cuts them sharper than a sword.

Ought we not then to pray and stand on our watch-tower night and day, and call upon Christ our Lord that he would at length exercise his severity, and send all these things to destruction, so that these detestable iniquities may have an end, and that all such offences may be taken out of the world? For if we be not in the end saved from these things, we shall be by far the most wretched of all mortals that ever were born. We are not only to look at the loss and destruction of a wicked world, and how it is to fare with them, but what grief is brought upon us Christians, and upon God himself, because his Word is so despised, treated with ignominy, and blasphemed, and his preachers loaded with every insult in deed and word, and with every kind of injury: for all preaching to, entreating, rebuking, admonishing and threatening the world, are useless and in vain. Therefore, the sight of these signs ought to be unto us a

source of pleasure; seeing that God, by them, makes his designs known unto us, and consoles us by those premonitions, that he will shortly enter into the fight of judgment with the world, and will deliver us from all evils and afflictions. Wherefore, this day of salvation is to be looked for by us not only with a gladdened expectation, but to be desired and prayed for, with sighs and groans unto Christ our Lord, and by our saying unto him, ‘Thou hast promised unto us this day, wherein thou wilt redeem us: grant therefore, if consistent with thy will, that it may come in this hour, and that it may put an end to all the sorrows of this life.’

And here, take if thou wilt for an example the Papists our enemies. How do they rejoice, glory, and exalt themselves, at every time when there is even the least hope held out to them of destroying us and the Gospel together? With what shouting, with what expectations, did they wait for the arrival of the Emperor in Germany to annihilate the Lutherans, and to establish again their own power and tyranny! With what rejoicings and triumphs did they not prepare to adorn his victory when he was on the point of coming! Here were heard the unbounded gloryings, exultations, derisions, songs, jubilees, and dancings, of those who were hoping to bathe themselves in our blood! And so excessive were there exultations, that they knew not how to prepare themselves adequately for such a triumph and festivity. Some kept the matter a secret to themselves, and only measured out the joy in their own thoughts, and did not communicate to others the secret expectation of their minds, excepting to some of their most intimate friends, whom they made acquainted with their feelings by an epistolatory correspondence. Others however with open voices cried out and shouted, A saviour is come! A saviour is come! And there were no bounds to their rejoicings.

Behold! to such a pitch of exultation could those robbers and murderers rise, from their confidence in one false saviour! who, nevertheless, could have brought them no help, even if he had joined the whole of his

forces to theirs. Thus did they with all the sanguineness of hope, expect that they should be again exalted, and to a much more lofty and magnificent height than ever they had been before when they wallowed unmolested in all their abominable malice and impenitent life. And so confident and insolent were they, that, from my pendent solicitude of mind, I had well nigh been driven to doubt that the Lord would fulfil what he had engaged to do, and to fear that he would be false to his promise, where he has said 'that he will be our salvation,' when he admonishes us so expressly in the 146th Psalm, where he says, 'that we are not to put our trust in princes, for there is no help in them,' when they join their heads together in secret conference, and take counsel together, and from their plans,—with what force, with what preparations, with what arms they shall attack us, as though they had us already to a certainty in their own hands. And thus did these atrociously threaten and rage; just as though they designed to tear away from God that glory of his — frustrating the counsels of princes! God, however, suffered not his glory to be thus torn from him, but as being true, stood faithful to his promises; so that they were compelled to leave this scripture still untouched, and we have lived to see them frustrated, by the instrumentality of their very saviour. For they were frustrated with a witness, nor did they find our King to be such an one as they expected, not such an one as they would willingly have found him to be. Therefore, in the face of all their rage, glory be to God! we have remained safe unto this day, and I believe shall continue so for some time to come, whether they will or no.

I THUS put you in remembrance of these things by way of example, because they had so much confidence and glorying in one man, from whom they had no promise; nor was it in his power to perform his promise even if he had made it. Why should not we then have a much greater confidence and glorying through our hope in the true Saviour, who has not only sacredly engaged to come and save us in a short time, but is able also to

do the same and will do it, and who will not deceive, as being one that never was found to be false? and especially, since we wait for him with a good conscience, as defending a good and invincible cause, for the sake of which we willingly suffer all things, seeing that it is God's cause and not ours? And therefore we are not like those, who, putting all their confidence in their Emperor, only designed to confirm themselves in their nefarious crimes and enormities!

Moreover, it much more becomes us to glory and say, How blessed will those more than golden times be, when our true Saviour shall come, who will at once do away with all those iniquities and enormities, and all those injuries which we must bear for the present, and will at one stroke put an end to every evil! Then shall the Gospel and its most holy name no longer be so basely spit upon and blasphemed! Then shall the preachers, who now suffer the extreme of necessity, endure persecution no longer, nor be any more indignantly trampled under foot. Then shall there be no more mutual robberies, thefts, rapines, plunders, injuries, lies, impostures, informations, accusations, treacheries, adulteries, debaucheries, murders, which every one now commits with impunity! Then shall we be delivered from every evil, and have to fear neither sin, nor death, nor the devil, nor the world any more; but shall reign in eternal salvation, peace, tranquillity, and joy!

And are not these things to be breathed after by us with the most ardent longing? If we were but permitted to see clearly, with what an infinite number of devils we are surrounded, who are laying wait for us and aiming at us every moment some evil and envenomed dart or another, and tempting us with every allurements and inducement to sin, we should then, with bended knees pray and entreat for that day, that should put an end to this miserable life.

SECOND PART.

Hence, Christ admonishes us in this Gospel, that we should behold these signs with joy; and says,

“ And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” Sorrow, naturally bows the head down, for those that are sorrowful, go moping about with a dejected countenance. On the other hand, a glad and happy heart lifts up the head and brightens the countenance, so that the man looks about him with a sweetness and cheerfulness.—Therefore Christ saith, when ye see these signs begin to take place, when all things both in heaven and earth wear a dejecting aspect, and work together to fill you also with alarm, and to cause you to go with your heads bowed down,—be not moved by them; for they are not directed against you, but against those that persecute and oppress you. Therefore, act just in the contrary way, even as they also pervert all things. Make a right distinction, that ye may be able to look upon these things with joyful eyes, as predicting not your destruction, but your redemption, and an unutterable measure of all those blessings, which it never could enter into your minds to desire. Give no place to the devil, when he would so set the nature of these signs before you, as to almost cause your spirits to melt away with fear, and would load your hearts with sorrow, by infusing a dejected faintness into your minds, to prevent you from raising up your heads with a cheerful countenance, and from desiring that day, and to make you continually sink under heavy thoughts in such a fearful time. Rather, accustom yourselves to look at those signs with steady eyes, according to the hints I have given you. For, ye have no reason whatever to distress yourselves, nor to give way to sadness, but ought rather to rejoice; seeing that these signs indicate to you, nothing else but that your redemption is even at the door, which shall deliver both me and you from every evil.

Behold, this blessed teacher knew better how to interpret these signs than all prognostics or astrologers. They foretel from these signs nothing but what is dreadful and fearful, and calculated to fill men with terror: whereas, Christ tells you that there is nothing but good pro-

dicted by them. And those signs which human reason and the whole world look upon as portending perdition, and to be dreaded,—under the same signs Christ sees and foretels every good !

Moreover, does not that word so full of all consolation, “ your redemption,” embrace and indicate all that every one of us most ardently desires ? For, what is meant by “ your redemption,” but that thou, who art now held captive by the devil, who attacks thee with every kind of weapon, and plies all his artillery against thee,—that thou, who art oppressed and driven into every strait by the world, and exposed to every kind of necessity and peril, from which no one can deliver thee,—shalt be delivered and saved by Christ thy Lord, who shall carry and translate thee into that the place, where thou shalt be made lord over the devil, the world, and death ! Why then wilt thou fear and dread such signs as these, and not rather behold and welcome them with a smiling countenance ?

How wouldst thou feel if thou hadst to stand in a circle where thou wert surrounded on all sides with every kind of missive weapon, or rather, with town-battering engines, all pointed directly at thee, ready to be discharged at thee as at a mark, where death was all around thee expected every moment,—shouldst thou not rejoice from thy very heart, if any one, like some divinity appearing unexpectedly, should rescue and deliver thee ? or if a terrible thunder and lightning should with a sudden stroke, dash all the engines, swords, daggers, spears, and all the host around thee prostrate ? Or, what dost thou imagine would be the feelings of any miserable captive’s mind, who has for a long time been imprisoned under a cruel tyrant, suffering under filth and vermin and all the miseries of a dungeon, if he should hear that his own prince was meditating upon undertaking to deliver him and rescue him from such scenes of misery ? What alarm, think ye, he would feel if he should behold his prince coming with all hostile armament, and should see his battering engines laying every thing around them level with the dust—with no

alarm at all ! This sight might indeed be terrible to those that were without, and to those whom it immediately concerned ; but, to the poor captive, this demolition would bring the greatest pleasure, joy, and consolation ; for all the thunderings of the engines and the crashing of the walls, would make sweeter music in his ears, than any melody or harmony of voices singing in the sweetest concert : and this day he would ever after hold as a joyous festival, wherein he would render thanks unto God, who had enabled him to live to see its dangers overpast.

And, in the same way ought we to be affected when we see these signs awfully attended with fire, water, lightning, and thunder, as though all things were going to be involved in one universal ruin. Under which circumstances we may also conceive these thoughts — we may look upon them as the war-engines of God ; whereby he designs to deliver us who are here held captive in the kingdom of the devil through sin, afflicted by the world in every way, and punished with exile and every kind of misery ; and whereby he designs to storm the prison in which we are confined, and to hurl it to destruction. — Why then should we be terrified at the sight of these things, and not rather endure every difficulty and bitterness, wherewith we are afflicted by the world and the devil, with joy, since God will soon come and deliver us from them ? For, if we had not this confidence and consolation left us, certainly we should be the most miserable of all mortals ; who would have need at once to wish that they had never been born, and never had a God. But this consolation is to be our stay, — knowing that he will come who sends these signs as his fore-runners, by which we may be assured that he himself is not far behind them.

AND if in the meantime we are tossed, vexed, and afflicted by opposing storms arising from the wickedness of ungodly men, and are obliged to drink the bitter draughts which they force upon us, and to suffer in addition to our daily events, disease, pestilence, famine, and those wars whereby they assail us, and all those

things which are better to be borne by the body or the external man; yet all this is to be endured, drank, and swallowed down with patience; and even as one would taste and eat of bitter fruit, so this bitter draught must be tasted by us in order that our sweet draught to come may have the greater savour, and that we may be driven to wait for the coming of that last day with the greater desire of expectation. But if this were not the case with us, we should become indolent and cold in our walk, and at last should not feel our danger, but should become like the world, secure and impenitent, and should together with them be wholly drowned in the love, the desire, and the pleasures of this life, yea even unto the casting off all regard for the Word of God, and should perish with the wicked. But now, he sets before us this grace which begets in us a loathing and disgust of this life, and in the most consoling manner promises that which is far better: namely, that he will ere long come in the clouds with glory and great majesty, and will deliver us out of all perils, and take us away into everlasting life: than which what can we have more great or more glorious.

But his coming will not be so desirable to the ungodly. For he will, in a moment, so utterly destroy all those who have now despised his Word, and his signs, that they shall be compelled to remain in eternal pains and torments. And although it is by no means a small grief unto good Christians to consider in their minds such a destruction of the world, (for they feel a distress at the perishing of the wicked,) yet he would call them away from so doing by these words; thereby shewing them, that they should rather consider the necessity of their redemption, than the greatness of the destruction of the wicked; and be more persuaded of the reason why God does so, and that he could not do otherwise since they so richly deserve it; for they never think of ceasing to persecute the Gospel, which they ridicule, treat with contempt, spit upon, and load with every kind of insult and blasphemy, and distress and afflict its preachers with violence, injury, and temerity: from

which determination they can be kept back by no admonitions, entreaties, threats, or rebukes, but are deaf to every thing, and will believe nothing till they feel it by experience. Nay, in such security are they, that whatever is terrible to be beheld, or horrid to hear of, they lay upon us, and attribute to us the cause of all the evils, all the perils, and all the losses; and publicly say that we brought the whole upon them. And, in a word, after we have done all our duties, by preaching, by praying, by advising, and by jeoparding our lives for the benefit of the world, we obtain no other reward than the greatest contempt, hatred, envy, and the most insidious treachery, at the sight of which our heart may well nigh melt and break.

Hence, God must of necessity do this at some time or other, if he will establish his majesty over the world; to the end that they might see, that his Word and threats, (of which they make a laughing-stock, and a mockery,) are true; and that he himself can and will deliver his miserably afflicted Christians. For, since they persevere in scorning with so unconcerned and insolent a mind, the passion, death, and resurrection of his own Son, and all that he ever said and did, they shall be at some time or other filled with fear and terror, while we rejoice and glory in an everlasting life.

WHEREFORE, if there be any feeling of compassion in thy heart, rather pity the afflicted Christians, who are compelled to endure so many wounds and evils from the world: or rather, pity the Gospel, and the most holy name of Christ and of God, in which thou hast been baptized and called unto the fellowship of eternal life: which name the ungodly in this world shamefully and blasphemously spit upon, despise, trample under foot, persecute, and ignominiously and insultingly lacerate. For, what would that compassion be which should lead us to pity such impious murderers, who know no repentance, who will not become better, nor cease from their malice before they perish utterly, and all hope of their repentance be at an end for ever? Are we to suffer with a patient mind the thrice holy name of God and

of Christ, and every thing else which belongs to them, to be treated thus ignominiously, basely, and criminally? Are we to do it that the kingdom of the devil might thereby stand, and be established and prevail, and the kingdom of God be oppressed and overcome? I would rather see with unconcern ten worlds perish ten times over, than see one Christian always remain in his sufferings—not to observe in the mean time how unworthy it would be of Christ himself, as well as of all Christianity, to remain long in such a state of contempt.

Therefore, it is ours to pray with an earnest and confident mind, ‘Thy kingdom come.’ And we ought moreover to desire and entreat with all diligence at the hand of God, that the world may perish and be utterly destroyed, and every thing that by its arrogance and blasphemy is contrary to Christ and his blood, and will not cease from raging against, contending with, and persecuting his miserable Christians.

Hence, the form of prayer prescribed by Christ teaches us, that we ought to pray earnestly and confidently that that day may come, and that we ought to call upon God without ceasing, that he would at length revenge, on those desperate and impious ungodly ones, the intolerable insult put upon his name, his blood, and all his other blessings; nor can, nor ought, any Christian to pray otherwise. And who ought to pray thus but the Christian, who is thus driven into straits and afflicted on account of his baptism and his Gospel, and on account of the kingdom and name of God, and who has no other refuge in this world but that of prayer? And he who has not these feelings, and that mind which may lead him to desire that day from his inmost soul, he by no means understands the Lord’s Prayer, much less can he pray it from his heart. This I myself once very sensibly felt: and so much did I hate the Lord’s Prayer, that I would rather be engaged in praying any other prayers. But this prayer becomes sweet when thou hast been tossed about by various sorrows and afflictions, and art suffering evils. When thou art under the pressure of calamities, thou wilt pray it

from thy heart. For which of us would not most ardently desire and pray, that we might be delivered from evil, and that all our miseries and vexations in the world might be brought to an end, when we see the world (which really is the case) willing to remain as it is, and not suffering its old habits to be altered, nor wishing nor desiring to amend its ways, but becoming daily worse and worse? For, as to myself, I do not live here otherwise than if I were placed in a den of robbers and murderers, where I could by no means defend and protect myself from violence. And here, I would try and do any thing to obtain the possibility of getting away or procuring to myself any one who could deliver me: as the good Cyprian says, ‘Who can find any pleasure in living in such a filthy and turbulent state of things, where we are situated just as if we were placed in the middle of a circle, and darts and every kind of weapon were pointed at us on every side? And how can such an one be happy before he can behold some one who is able to rescue him from such a state?’ So we also, when we seriously consider in what evils we are involved, and to what perils we are exposed; how the devil is laying snares for us in every direction, and attacking us with all his violence, whereby we are compelled to endure all his bitter weapons, and empoisoned darts; and how impossible it is for us ever to attain to any rest while death thus threatens us on the one hand, and calamities on the other;—when we seriously consider these things, what can we desire with more earnest longings than that we may be delivered and rescued from such heavy calamities as soon as possible.

Wherefore, if thou be not filled with a desire after the coming of this day, thou canst never pray the Lord’s Prayer, nor canst thou repeat from thy heart the Creed of Faith. For with what conscience canst thou say, ‘I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting,’ if thou dost not in thy heart desire the same? If thou didst believe it, thou must of necessity desire it from thy heart, and long for that day to come: which, if thou dost not desire, thou art not yet a Christian, nor

canst thou boast of thy faith. Nay, thou canst not even perceive the meaning of the Ten Commandments. For what is the meaning of those words, where it says, 'I am the Lord thy God—thou shalt not take my name in vain?' And again, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c.? Do not these very words shew, to what sins and iniquities our life is subject? that we are in that state, that we cannot live without sins and the greatest perils, because the devil is striving with all his might that God may not be God alone, and that we might not live among each other a peaceable, quiet, and divine life? and that, the devil is ever establishing mere idolatry, and inventing abuses and blasphemies of the divine name, and driving men with all his powers to disobedience, seditions, wrath, lust, uncleanness, rapines, thefts, and murders, and to the perpetration of every iniquity and enormity? As a remedy against which, and for the averting of which, the Lord's prayer was formed and instituted by Christ himself. If therefore we feel those dire evils, and desire to be delivered from them, nothing else remains but that, now the remedy is shewn unto us, we use it with all devotedness, and that we cry unto God that his holy name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, that his will may be done, and that he would at some time or other deliver us from all evil.—For as I have often said, no better or more holy state of life is to be hoped for in this world: and more especially in these times, when it seems to be come to the height of its depravity, and to be on the brink of the gulph of perdition. For it is filled with a generation of their father the devil, and with those fruits concerning which no hope can be entertained: and all labour in attempting to reform and ameliorate it, is spent in vain. This we see openly: for the Word of God goes on to be despised more and more, and errors of every description, pestilential sects, and enormous iniquities, gain ground daily; by all which, it is continually growing worse and worse, and leaves us no room to hope for any repentance. Why then should we have any desires to live amid such mise-

ries and calamities? Nay, what consolation should we find if we should consider, what would be the life of men and the state of things in the world that should be left behind us, if, while we who have the Gospel are alive, all things are turned upside down?

But, even if we should not desire this last day for ourselves, yet the perils and necessities of our brethren scattered every where throughout the world, ought to move us to expect earnestly that day. And in what a state their affairs are we plainly see; for they are not only compelled to see and hear those things that fill them with the greatest grief, but to endure every kind of insult, violence, and injury, and the most bitter persecutions. Some of them are killed and murdered with diverse and cruel torments. And how many, I pray you, have we, during our lifetime, seen carried off, some being openly burnt, some destroyed by one punishment and another, and some despatched treacherously and clandestinely. I make no mention now of those saints who have been killed before us, since the days of Christ down to our times, or rather, since the beginning of the world;—whose blood, yet unrevenged, expects with longing desire the coming of that day, wherein they shall at once be called to the enjoyment of their long-expected honours, and shall see vengeance taken on the world. This John (Revelations vi.) shews; where God comforts those saints by saying unto them, “that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Hence both the living and the dead saints require of us, that we should be a help to them in praying unto God, that he would hasten their redemption.

And what could happen to Christians more calamitous, than the being compelled utterly to hold their peace while under oppression, and while the devil and the world ceased not to rage against and triumph over them with all ferocity and exultation, but only went on to murder the more of them? What! shall we cease to pray, in order that men may seduce the more, and go on

to commit more and more those sins which they found it impossible to commit before? By that means, we should have to endure the more evils and wounds, and that, from our own fault!

We now hear and see, that the Turk—as well as the Pope-antichrist, rages against and assails the name of Christ and the blood of Christians with the most cruel tyranny, and that many diverse sects contradict our Gospel.—Should we then still be sitting down with our hands folded, and calmly looking on, while the devil is exerting with all his power, and without intermission, every species of his lust and temerity? Should we not rather call upon God concerning it without cessation? There can be no vein of the Christian nature in thy body, if thou dost not beg of God from thy heart, to be delivered from such miseries as soon as possible.

Wherefore, if we have any desire to be Christians, we must give all diligence to devote ourselves to prayer with all our heart; even as Christ has taught us, and as our necessities urgently require. For it ought to be unto us a source of the greatest grief, to hear the Gospel and the name of Christ so awfully blasphemed, to see Christians so cruelly destroyed with such bitter persecutions, the true doctrine so opposed, the kingdom of the devil, together with every species of malice, iniquity, and sin, so encouraged by impunity, and every saint lying neglected, ground to dust and powder by persecution, and cast to oblivion.

Let us then cry unto God with as loud a voice as we can, praying that he would display and vindicate his honour and glory in himself and his Christianity; that he would revenge his name, and the blood of his children, and would exalt and bring them to that glory which he has promised them, and has of old prepared for them.—And if, on account of thy flesh, thou feelest thyself still filled with fear and alarm concerning that day, then fix carefully in thy mind the words of Christ, by which thy heart is to be fortified, and in which he commands thee to lift up thy head and to be of good courage, calling that day ‘our redemption;’ that is, not

death, but life eternal ; not wrath, but pure grace ; not hell, but the kingdom of heaven ; not terror nor peril, but rejoicing and gladness.

Hence, Paul to Titus, chap. iii. very properly calls that day, “ that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Wherefore, we ought to be of good courage ; for he who is well acquainted with these things, and is touched with a true desire after them, will not be afraid of his salvation and his eternal life, together with all its blessings, nor will he dread the coming of him who gave unto us the Gospel and grace,—not that we should deny them, but love and confess them, and endure, for their sake, every thing that may be inflicted upon us, either by the devil or by men.

Thus behold, this day will not be terrible, but desirable and lovely in its appearing ; not however unto the world, but unto us miserable and distressed sinners, who are compelled to lie here in this den of robbers, where the devil is plotting destruction against us day and night ; not only desiring to take away from us our lives and our poor fortunes, but terrifying our hearts and consciences, that we may dread the day of our redemption ; and may, being deprived of our consolation, despair and sink under our perils.

But this same day shall bring to the world nothing but terror, trembling, death, pestilence, destruction, and all the torments of hell ; though the world will never believe these things, till they feel them. Wherefore, when this day shall come upon them on a sudden, and shall destroy all things with utter destruction, thou hast no reason whatever to fear that it will hurt thee, and that thou shalt fall and perish together with the world ; for at that day thou shalt either be raised again out of the tomb and from the dust, and shall be caught up into heaven ; or, thou shalt, in a moment, be changed into an eternal blessedness, where there shall be no sin, no terror, no peril, no sorrow, but where pure grace, righteousness, joy, peace, life, rest, and immortality, shall reign for ever ! And these things we wait for, and

hold forth to the poor simple flock who shall receive them !

This then is that consolation which no man can give or imagine, and which comes only by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Christ. Let then the sun and the moon, and all creatures wear an awful aspect and threaten terror:—their sight shall be terrible to the world, but not unto us. Upon us, they shall sweetly smile, because we can see under them that consolation which Christ has set forth to us in these words, where he concludes, adding a beautiful simile—“ Behold the fig-tree and all the trees : when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”

This indeed is a wonderful representation, which I could never have applied to this subject, nor ever have thought of. For who ever once heard, that the darkening of the sun and moon, the threatening ruin of heaven and earth, the trembling and melting away of men for fear, the impending destruction and the roaring of the air, the water, and every creature, were like the budding and blossoming of trees? Yet here it is said to be like the flourishing and breaking forth of trees, and the dawning of summer : and it certainly is language never heard before. I should rather have thought, the contrary comparison might have been made with more propriety :—that such things were like the approaching of the cold and inclement winter, killing and destroying before it all fruits and every thing that grows upon the face of the earth. But Christ is the most perfect master of words, and knows how to speak of things, and how to raise up his disciples with an effectual consolation better than we do : he can make unto us out of the most unlovely sight, the most lovely, and a view full of consolation, from explaining his own words by a beautiful interpretation. So that, if I shall see the sun and the moon to be darkened, the winds and the waters to be put in commotion by storms and tempests, and mountains to

be cast down and levelled with the plains, I will say,—
 Glory be to God ! for the fruitful summer at length appears : I now see the woods begin to leaf and the trees to bud. In this manner no man, no reason, no human wisdom throughout the world, can speak or interpret:—that under these signs, so fearful to the sight, nothing but redemption and perpetual joy are signified as approaching ; which seem rather to signify, to reason and human wisdom, the approach of death and every destruction.

Wherefore, come, let *us* learn also and accustom ourselves to this kind of speaking, whereby we may consolingly fix these things in our minds, and view them and judge of them according to the Word. For, by following reason and wisdom, we can learn nothing, but must dread and shun such things. For reason unwillingly beholds all things to be so obscured by terrible darkness, and to carry a threatening appearance ; and to her, thunderings and lightnings, and hurricanes of winds, are by no means pleasing. But the Christian ought not to be moved by these things, but ought to lay hold of the Word, wherein Christ opens our eyes, in order that we may interpret it as Christ interprets it—that these things indicate that the fruitful summer is approaching ; that the earth shall shortly pour forth an abundance of the most flourishing lilies and roses beautiful to behold ; and that, immediately after this wretched and depraved life, in which we are now tossed to and fro, there shall be found a haven of rest, felicity, and pleasure, that never shall end !

And this is the will of Christ—that as we are new creatures, so we should entertain new and other thoughts, understandings and feelings ; and behold nothing with the eye of reason as the world does, but view them as they are in his sight. And moreover, that we should walk according to our future, visible, and new life, which we hope we shall certainly have after all these tribulations ; and that we should not harbour any desires of remaining in this life, nor be affected with sorrow because we are to depart from it, or because the

world with all its creatures, together with so many men, must perish. But rather, we are to feel for the miserable Christians; both those who are alive, and are so afflicted and oppressed, and also those who are dead and asleep in their graves and waiting to come forth into their glory, like corn buried during the winter in the earth, or like sap concealed in the trees: which being hindered by the cold, cannot break forth into new leaves and buds, but thirstingly waits for the summer, that it might at length burst forth in buds and grow and flourish. In the same way we ought also to rejoice because that day is coming; and ought to say, The rigour of the winter has now continued for a long time, but at length the fruitful summer will come, and that summer which never shall cease. At the coming of which, not all the saints only, but also all the angels shall exult and rejoice; nay, which the whole creation expects and anxiously awaits.—For, the heaven, the earth, the sun, the stars, the air, and all creatures, can no longer endure the iniquity of the world: which iniquity they are compelled to witness, but with the greatest grief, because they must be abused by the indulgers in sin, and be a help to every kind of ungodliness both to the world and to the devil; and they would fain be delivered from all this iniquity together with us, and become that new heavens and a new earth of which Peter and Isaiah speak, in which righteousness alone shall dwell. For the iniquity and wickedness of men exceed all bounds, so that they are no longer tolerable; and hence all the creation is moved, and, as it were, cries unto God for deliverance.

And therefore it is, that Christ thus concludes—
 “So likewise ye, when ye see these things begin to come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” As though he had said, Ye have prayed “Thy kingdom come,” and, “deliver us from evil:” therefore, now, be ye assured, (and so assured as my Word is true and eternal,) when ye see these signs, that your prayers are

heard, that the kingdom of God will come according to your prayers, and that the kingdom of the devil and sin will come to an end and be abolished for ever. When therefore he shall come in the clouds with all angels in great glory, and in a flame of fire unspeakable at which all creatures shall melt away and be consumed, then shall all things shine with light and splendour unspeakable, our bodies shall be made so glorious that they shall exceed the brightness of the sky, and shall shine transcendently before all creatures, and before heavenly hosts, and shall enjoy with Christ ineffable glory. Moreover, we shall see the wicked under our feet, naked and in perpetual shame, fearing, trembling, accursed, cast down into hell.

Behold, it is thus that the signs that shall precede the last day, are to be set forth unto Christians : — they indicate unto us unspeakable joy, and bring them nothing to hurt us, but are for our benefit and profit. Let astrologers tell others that they portend nothing but war, murder, and extreme perils : and let them tremble and fear, since they are such who neither have nor desire any thing beyond these temporal pleasures and days of self-enjoyment. We, however, shall lift up our heads as being new creatures in Christ. And, as Christ is Lord of the heaven, the earth, and the whole creation, so we also are lords of all signs, and whatever is terrible ; nor can any thing whatever hurt us, although it should assault and even take away this life. For our life and conversation are not here, but we look for another wherein our body shall be delivered ; which life is hidden by faith with Christ in heaven, (as Paul says) but which shall soon be revealed before the whole world in eternal life and everlasting glory. Amen.

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